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Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

CALIFORNIA JEWISH COMMUNITY ORAL HISTORY SERIES

Alfred Fromm

WINES, MUSIC, AND LIFELONG EDUCATION

With an Introduction by
Rabbi Brian Lurie

Interviews Conducted by
Elaine Dorfman and Caroline Crawford
in 1986 and 1987

And Including Interviews by
Ruth Teiser Conducted in 1984

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ALFRED FROMM

1980

Jewish Bulletin
7/10/98

Jewish Bulletin July 10, 1998

Wine pioneer Alfred Fromm, S.F. philanthropist, dies at 93

LESLIE KATZ
Bulletin Staff

As a young man, Alfred Fromm helped bring 37 family members from Nazi Germany to safety in the United States. Fifty years later, the internationally known wine industry leader was a major donor to the campaign to help resettle Jews from the former Soviet Union in Israel.

"He saved a lot of Jewish lives, personally, as well as in a collective way," said his son-in-law Rabbi Brian Lurie.

The dedicated philanthropist, who made both Christian Brothers and Paul Masson wineries household names, died at his San Francisco home July 2. He was 93.

But San Francisco may remember Fromm best for founding, together with his wife Hanna, the Fromm Institute for Lifelong Learning at the University of San Francisco. The program of daytime university courses engages emeritus professors to teach retired people over age 50 and now has a student body of more than 950.

Alfred Fromm

For establishing the school, the Fromms were granted an honorary degree of doctor of public service by USF in 1979. That year, they established a USF sister program, the Fromm Institute, at the Hebrew University.

"He was truly committed to Israel," Lurie said.

Born in 1905 in Kitzingen, Bavaria, Fromm was the fourth generation of a family of vintners. He got involved in the business as a teenager. After a three-year apprenticeship, he joined his family's firm, N. Fromm, and by 1930 was their export manager, traveling abroad extensively for the sale of the firm's wine.

In 1936, he married Hanna Gruenbaum, anticipating a conventional life and career. As the politics of Germany changed, however, so did Fromm's life. The couple moved to this country and found backers to help the rest of the family immigrate here.

In California, he founded Fromm and Sichel Inc., which as worldwide distributors of Christian Brothers wine and brandy, became one of America's largest distributors of fine wines.

While deeply involved in the wine industry, he found time to dedicate himself to numerous charitable and civic causes. Among many involvements, he served as director of the San Francisco Opera Association and as a trustee of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

He founded the Wine Museum of San Francisco, co-founded the Jewish Museum San Francisco and was an ardent supporter of the Judah L. Magnes Museum in Berkeley.

"He had a particular interest in Jewish art and culture," Lurie said. "He would say 'man does not live by bread alone. Art and culture makes one's life richer, better.'"

A member of Congregation Emanu-El in San Francisco, he also served on the board of the Jewish National Fund.

"He was just a truly wonderful, great man," Lurie said. "What he did for anyone who came to see him was make them feel important, worthy. You left his presence feeling blessed."

Fromm, in his autobiography, wrote that three things were important to incorporate into daily life: "the importance of learning, strong family bonds and charity."

"By his own measure, Alfred Fromm led just such a good life," said Robert Fordham, director of the Fromm Institute. "He embodied those precepts he espoused."

Fromm is survived by his wife and two children, David Fromm and Caroline Fromm-Lurie. He is also survived by five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

A private memorial service for Fromm was held Sunday. The family asks that contributions be made to the Fromm Institute of Lifelong Learning, University of San Francisco, 2130 Fulton St., S.F., CA 94117, or the charity of one's choice.

San Francisco Examiner

July 7, 1998

S.F. wine merchant Alfred Fromm

EXAMINER STAFF REPORT

Alfred Fromm, a prominent wine merchant and philanthropist who founded the Fromm Institute for Lifelong Learning at the University of San Francisco, died at his San Francisco home last Thursday. He was 93.

Mr. Fromm was born in Kitzingen, Bavaria, in 1905, into the fourth generation of a family of vintners. As a young man, he apprenticed with the family firm, N. Fromm, and by 1930 was the company's export manager, traveling abroad to sell the family's wine.

Alfred Fromm

In 1936 he married Hanna Gruenbaum. That same year, the couple fled to the United States to escape Nazi persecution in Germany.

The Fromms settled in San Francisco, and he founded Fromm & Sichel, Inc., which grew into one of this country's largest wine distributors, carrying Christian Brothers wine and brandy, among other labels.

As his business became successful, Mr. Fromm devoted himself increasingly to cultural and charitable work in the San Francisco Bay Area, focusing especially on education, Jewish causes and music and art.

In 1976, the Fromms provided the funding to establish the Fromm Institute for Lifelong Learning at USF. The program, taught by emeritus professors, offers university courses to retired people regardless of their educational background or financial status. In 1979, the couple set up a sister program, the Fromm Institute at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Over the past several decades, Mr. Fromm had served as a director of the San Francisco Opera Association, a trustee of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and a founder of the Wine Museum of San Francisco. He was a governor of the Jewish National Fund, a co-founder of the San Francisco Jewish Community Museum and a supporter of the Judah Magnes Museum in Berkeley.

Mr. Fromm was appointed a regent at St. Mary's College in Moraga, where he was awarded an honorary doctor of humane letters. He established scholarships at Brandeis University and Hastings College of Law, and served on the Advisory Board of S.F. State. He was a director of the Gleeson Library Association at USF and in 1979 received an honorary Doctor of Public Service from that university.

In addition to his wife, Mr. Fromm is survived by his son, David; a daughter, Caroline Fromm-Lurie; and several grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Private services were held Sunday, and a memorial is planned for a later date.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Fromm Institute for Lifelong Learning or any other charity.

San Francisco Chronicle
July 7, 1998

Alfred Fromm

A memorial service is planned for Alfred Fromm, a philanthropist who was one of the pioneers of the modern California wine industry. Mr. Fromm died at his San Francisco home Thursday at the age of 93.

Mr. Fromm had three careers in his long life: He was a winemaker from a German Jewish family of distinguished vintners; he was a master of wine marketing who helped put California wines on the map; and he and his wife, Hanna, gave a fortune to educational and cultural organizations.

His philosophy was contained in his autobiography. He believed, he wrote, in "the importance of learning, strong family bonds and charity."

He was a founder of the Fromm Institute for Lifelong Learning at the University of San Francisco, which uses emeritus professors to teach courses designed for persons over the age of 50. The Fromm Institute, which he set up in 1976, now has more than 1,000 students.

Mr. Fromm was born in Kitzingen, Germany, in 1905, into a family of vintners. He left school at 15 to apprentice in the wine business and by 1930 was export manager for N. Fromm, the family's 200-year-old firm.

Mr. Fromm married Hanna Gruenbaum in 1936 and left Nazi Germany for the United States. Eventually, he was able to bring his relatives to America. "I am happy here," he said later. "This country has been good to me."

He saw the possibilities for the domestic wine business when others did not. "When I first came to this country," he said later, "wine ... was considered a sissy drink by people who consumed rotgut whisky."

He made a careful study of the Sonoma and Napa valleys and became convinced that premium wines equal to those in Europe could be produced in California. He and some partners obtained worldwide sales rights to Napa Valley wines produced by the Brothers of the Christian Schools,

With Franz Sichel, his late partner, he turned the small, struggling Christian Brothers wine into a major brand, and in the process helped develop the market for good wine among middle-class American families. "I have been a missionary in that sense," he said.

It was more than just a business to him. He drank half a bottle at dinner every night. "Wine is my medicine," he said, "a better and more relaxing medicine."

He marketed Paul Masson wines, and set up the Masson Music in the Vineyards program in Saratoga in the 1950s.

He also founded a wine museum at Hyde and Beach Streets which flourished for many years. He was interested in education as well. The success of Christian Brothers wine was a windfall for St. Mary's College in Moraga, which is operated by the Christian Brothers. Mr. Fromm helped the school with its academic programs and was a member of its board of regents.

Mr. Fromm retired as chairman of the board of Fromm and Sichel in 1978. Eventually, the Christian Brothers wine brand was sold, most recently to Heublein, Inc., which closed its St. Helena winery in 1993.

Mr. Fromm was more active than ever in retirement. He was a director of the San Francisco Opera Association, a trustee of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, governor of the Jewish National Fund, and a co-founder of the San Francisco Jewish Community Museum and chairman of its board of trustees.

In all these roles, he urged others to give to charities. When he asked others for help, he told them giving "will do your heart good." According to Robert Fordham, director of the Fromm Institute, it was one of his favorite expressions.

Mr. Fromm is survived by his wife, his son, Dr. David Fromm, chief of surgery at Wayne State University in Ohio, his daughter, Caroline Fromm Lurie of Ross, a psychotherapist, and five grandchildren.

Private services were held on Sunday. Memorial contributions may be made to the Fromm Institute for Lifelong Learning, University of San Francisco, San Francisco, 94117.

— Carl Nolte

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PREFACE

The California Jewish Community Series is a collection of oral history interviews with persons who have contributed significantly to Jewish life and to the wider secular community. Sponsored by the Western Jewish History Center of the Judah L. Magnes Memorial Museum, the interviews have been produced by the Regional Oral History Office of The Bancroft Library. Moses Rischin, professor of history at California State University at San Francisco, is advisor to the series, and Ruth Rafael is Archivist. Serving as an advisory committee is the board of the Western Jewish History Center. Present members are co-chairs Norman Coliver and Daniel E. Stone, and Seymour Fromer, James D. Hart, Louis H. Heilbron, Rabbi Robert Kirschner, Elinor Mandelson, Esther Reutlinger, Jacques Reutlinger, John Rothmann, Dana Shapiro, and Sue Rayner Warburg.

The California Jewish Community Series was inaugurated in 1967. During its first twenty years, former board members who served in an advisory capacity included Harold Edelstein, Cissie Geballe, James M. Gerstley, Douglas E. Goldman, Philip E. Lilienthal, Robert E. Sinton, Frank H. Sloss, Jacob H. Voorsanger, and Alma Lavenson Wahrhaftig.

In the oral history process, the interviewer works closely with the memoirist in preliminary research and in setting up topics for discussion. The interviews are informal conversations which are tape recorded, transcribed, edited by the interviewer for continuity and clarity, checked and approved by the interviewee, and then final-typed. The resulting manuscripts, indexed and bound, are deposited in the library of the Western Jewish History Center, The Bancroft Library, and the University of California at Los Angeles. By special arrangement copies may be deposited in other manuscript repositories holding relevant collections.

The Regional Oral History Office was established to tape record autobiographical interviews with persons prominent in recent California history. The Office, headed by Willa K. Baum, is under the administrative supervision of Professor James D. Hart, director of The Bancroft Library.

Seymour Fromer
Executive Director
The Magnes Museum

1 September 1988
Berkeley, California

CALIFORNIA JEWISH COMMUNITY ORAL HISTORY SERIES
OF THE JUDAH L. MAGNES MEMORIAL MUSEUM

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Schnier, Jacques, A Sculptor's Odyssey. 1987.

Treguboff, Sanford M., Administration of Jewish Philanthropy in San Francisco. 1988.

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INTRODUCTION by Rabbi Brian Lurie

My intimate knowledge of Alfred Fromm only goes back three and one-half years. But my recollections are enriched by one who has known him almost forty years -- his daughter and my wife, Caroline.

Few people are the same publicly and privately. How many men have been admired publicly only to be castigated by a son or daughter or wife for neglect, indifference and ill temper? Not Alfred Fromm. Always the gentleman, considerate, unspoiled, kind to family and the world at large. This is how Caroline described him when he was honored by the American Friends of Hebrew University:

> "The man who wrote children's stories for me when he had to go out of town so that I wouldn't be without an original bedtime story; or the man with whom I, as a child, rode all over San Francisco on a bus just to have the pleasure of speaking our own private gobbledygook in front of strangers; or the man who for hours helped me with my English essays when piles of his own work awaited him; or the man who always, always encouraged imagination mixed with reason, laughter with seriousness, adventuresomeness with practicality, generosity of spirit toward others with a degree of enlightened self-interest."

Alfred Fromm elevated manners to an art form. Long before my son-in-law status, he had earned from me the deserved distinction of being the most civilized man I have ever known.

Manners only embellish a razor-sharp mind. He has the innate ability to simplify the most complex problems. He thereby is able to express himself with great clarity and succinctness. Moreover, he is quick to see and acknowledge the insight of another and to learn from the ways of experience. Therefore, he is a man who is constantly learning as well as teaching.

Alfred Fromm is also a grateful man. Places that have been kind and good to him are called "lucky." The country that allowed him to find a safe haven from Nazi persecution he calls "great." The life he has led is full and rich and for this he is "grateful."

He sits in my "mind's eye" as he does in his livingroom after a family dinner, smoking a rich Havana cigar -- its smoke curling upward. A smile of total contentment fills his handsome, lined face. I feel my own luck -- the opportunity to see him in this relaxed way, feeling the respect and admiration I have for him. He is a model for me and for every man -- this Alfred Fromm.

Rabbi Brian Lurie
Executive Director
San Francisco Jewish
Community Federation

11 April 1986
San Francisco, California

INTERVIEW HISTORY — Alfred Fromm

The Regional Oral History Office of The Bancroft Library was commissioned by the Board of Trustees of the Western Jewish History Center, the Judah L. Magnes Museum, to interview Alfred Fromm for the California Jewish Community Oral History Series to round out the oral history of his business career, previously recorded in the California Winemen Series (this interview is reproduced as Part Two in this volume.) In addition, our charge was to document his significant contributions to the worlds of education, music, and the Jewish Community. Because of continued interest in this historical period, it became important to document not only Mr. Fromm's earlier life, but also that of his family who had been German citizens for over two hundred years.

Mr. Fromm and I met for the first time early in 1985 at a preliminary planning session, which we arranged by telephone. On May 16, 1985 we began a series of seven interviews, each an average of one and one-half hours in length. On May 22, 1987, after Mr. Fromm had reviewed the transcript, we completed the final interview. In January 1988, we met twice for two hour editing conferences. All sessions took place in the offices of Alfred Fromm's firm, Brandy Associated, located at 655 Montgomery Street, San Francisco, usually from 10 am until noon.

Alfred Fromm's seventeenth floor, substantial and contemporary suite of offices, with a noteworthy view from a wall of large windows, created an inviting place to work. During one editing meeting, we worked as we ate a tempting lunch ordered in by Mr. Fromm. We sat in comfortable, dark leather chairs that complement the round table at which we worked in Mr. Fromm's private office. A framed key to the city, presented by San Francisco Mayor Joseph Alioto in 1974, a photograph of Alfred Fromm with Samuel Bronfman, Seagram's founder, and another of some family members are seen on the office walls. Degrees awarded Alfred Fromm are framed and hang here as well.

Mr. Fromm was well-prepared and despite an obviously busy schedule, always prompt, and considerate. There were few interruptions, since the staff held all but the most urgent calls. Alfred Fromm was an eminently involved partner in the editing of his memoirs, taking much care to ensure the accuracy of dates, names, and clarity of his experiences. He subsequently chose to write out the concluding remarks which are included in the last interview with him.

On reading his wife's interview, he told me that he found it much more interesting than his memoir. Smiling broadly, he said, "It reminds me of Our Hearts Were Young and Gay by Cornelia Otis Skinner. The difference," he said, "is that Mrs. Fromm is better at spoken English, I am better at writing."

Although flexible and open to discussion, Alfred Fromm was firm in his opinion that we omit discussion of events in which he felt he had not been significantly involved. In his warm and kindly way, he nonetheless made it clear that he considered such additions to be self-enhancing and without value. He was patient, pleasant, and at times, expressed himself with humor, but questioned decisions to include what he felt was "immaterial." Several times we discussed the distinction between the spoken word recorded in oral memoirs and the written word found in manuscripts.

It was apparent from his interaction with his staff that Alfred Fromm is more than a figurehead. As he works at his desk early each weekday until late in the afternoon to fulfill a busy calendar, it was also evident that the attractive suite of offices is more than a symbol of power.

In addition to interviewing Alfred Fromm, it also became important to document the creative woman whom he credits as the architect of the Fromm Institute For Lifelong Learning. Mrs. Alfred Fromm's work and contributions have increased the dimensions of both music and education. We needed to record her accomplishments as well as her earlier life in Germany where she was born and lived.

Hanna Fromm greeted me at her front door on a sunny mid-afternoon in November 1985, our first meeting, and led me past book-lined walls into a lovely room with paintings by French and German impressionists. A sophisticated and busy person, she is a slender and graceful woman, well-groomed, softly and smartly dressed. She had just returned from her office at the Fromm Institute for Lifelong Learning on the University of San Francisco campus, where she works three days each week, in addition to her other activities. We had spoken by telephone several times and arranged for this, our first planning meeting. Mrs. Fromm was considerate about the heavy traffic I might encounter as we set the time for conferences.

During our planning session, we had coffee as we worked in Hanna Fromm's living room, facing a stunning view of the San Francisco Bay and the Golden Gate Bridge. She was forthright during our planning meeting and subsequent two hour interview and spoke with great sensitivity of people who endure suffering. The interview took place in the less formal of the home's two dining rooms, a room dominated by the view of the Bay.

When telling of why, despite both of their children being married and living with their own families for sometime, she and Alfred Fromm still live in "such a large house" ("My husband says he needs space -- always space."), Mrs. Fromm told witty stories about why she has only part-time assistance in their home. How some experiences such as one with the man sent by an agency to fill the role of housekeeper made the decision easier. The man's superior manner peaked when he asked to see his quarters, which were, Mrs. Fromm said, "quite nice with generous closets." This applicant, who referred to himself in the third person, suggested that "Madam may need to move some of her clothing to make room for William's belongings." Despite her very busy schedule, Hanna Fromm said, "that did it."

Upon the death of Kurt Herbert Adler some months ago, it became important to obtain information from those who had known and related closely with the man whose work had so significantly influenced the San Francisco Opera and the realm of music. Thus, this office decided to interview Alfred Fromm for details of his rememberances of Mr. Adler with whom he had a long and close friendship. The men shared an affiliation with the San Francisco Opera, which augmented their personal relationship. Caroline Crawford, our staff music interviewer, was selected to interview Mr. Fromm to document this information.

One of Mr. Fromm's most recent contributions has been as a co-founder and president of the founding board of trustees of the San Francisco Jewish Community Museum, 1984. He is a continuing member and patron.

Rabbi Brian Lurie, executive director of the San Francisco Jewish Community Federation and not incidentally, son-in-law to Alfred Fromm and a co-worker for the establishment of the museum, agreed to write the introduction. We thank Rabbi Lurie and Mrs. Fromm for the insights they have added to the character of this remarkable public citizen of California and the United States.

Publications relating to this memoir are on deposit at The Bancroft Library; the Western Jewish History Center, the Judah Magnes Museum; the Koret Living Library, and the Gleeson Library at the University of San Francisco.

Elaine Dorfman
Interviewer-Editor

18 May 1988
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California at Berkeley

BIOGRAPHY -- ALFRED FROMM, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD, FROMM AND SICHEL, INC.

Born February 23, 1905 at Kitzingen, Germany, located in the Franconian wine district, into an old family of vintners and shippers.

After attending grammar and high school, graduated from the Viticultural Academy in Geisenheim, Germany.

Married in 1936 to Hanna Gruenbaum. Children: Dr. David George Fromm, born 1939, Professor of Surgery at New York State University; daughter Carolynn Ann Fromm, born 1946, a psychiatric social worker and psychologist.

Started career in the wine business as an apprentice at the age of 15 in 1920 for a three year period. In 1924 he joined the family's firm, N. Fromm, Wine Growers and Shippers, in Kitzingen. The main seat was transferred in 1928 to Bingen-on-the-Rhine, where some of the largest cellars of Rhine and Moselle wines in Germany were maintained.

Became Export Manager in 1930 of N. Fromm G.m.b.H. and traveled extensively abroad for the sale of the firm's German wines.

First came to the United States in December 1933 to represent the family firm and traveled widely throughout the country. In 1936 emigrated to the United States, becoming a citizen in 1941. In 1937 became a partner in a small import firm of wines and spirits in New York.

Convinced that the future of the wine business was in California's premium wine districts, and foreseeing that a war would eliminate foreign supplies, he obtained the exclusive representation of The Christian Brothers winery in Napa, California, in 1937 and has been connected with this organization ever since.

In 1944, together with his friend Franz W. Sichel, founded the firm of Fromm and Sichel, Inc., with offices in San Francisco, New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and Atlanta, continuing the worldwide distribution of The Christian Brothers Wine, Champagne and Brandy.

Franz Sichel died in 1967, and Alfred Fromm is now Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer, retiring in August 1983.

The ownership of The Christian Brothers vineyards and wineries is held entirely by The Brothers of the Christian Schools, commonly known as The Christian Brothers, a religious Order of the Catholic Church. The Christian Brothers maintain 105 schools and colleges throughout the United States. They are the third largest Teaching Order of men of the Catholic Church, with 11,000 Brothers serving throughout the world and with schools all over the globe. Proceeds of their activities in the wine business are used by The Christian Brothers for the maintenance of their schools and colleges in the Western Province of the United States.

The Christian Brothers wines and brandy are sold nationally in every state of the Union and are exported worldwide to sixty countries.

In September 1974 Fromm and Sichel, Inc. moved into their new world headquarters building at 655 Beach Street on San Francisco's famous waterfront. Adjacent is The Wine Museum of San Francisco, which opened January 21, 1974. This first wine-in-the-arts Museum in the Western Hemisphere is devoted exclusively to praising the lore of wine through traditional and modern sculpture, artifacts, fine drawings and prints, rare books and drinking vessels.

Mr. Fromm is the Founder of The Wine Museum of San Francisco; a Regent of Saint Mary's College in the San Francisco East Bay; Trustee of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music; a Director of the United HIAS, New York; a Governor of the Jewish National Fund; Director of the San Francisco Opera Association; Director of the American Society of Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, Inc. and many other charitable and cultural organizations.

In 1975 Alfred and Hanna Fromm established the Fromm Institute for Lifelong Learning at the University of San Francisco. Mr. Fromm received a honorary Doctor of Humane Letters Degree at Saint Mary's College, in recognition of his interest in the college's educational program, as well as his interest in cultural education.

September 1979 -- Alfred Fromm was awarded honorary Degree of Doctor of Public Service by the University of San Francisco for his contribution to the education of retired men and women.

March 1981 -- Received the Jefferson Award for community service from the American Institute of Public Service

October 1982 -- Recipient of the first annual "Distinguished Service Award" from the Wine Spectator

October 1983 -- Fromm and Sichel, Inc. was sold to the Christian Brothers to consolidate production and marketing in one hand.

1984 -- With the sale of the firms Real Property the Wine Museum will be discontinued. Most of the artifacts will be turned over to the new Seagram Museum in Waterloo, Ontario. The Franz Sichel Glass collection, one of the finest in the contents. will be exhibited in one of the leading museums in the country.

PART ONE: WINE, MUSIC & LIFELONG EDUCATION

I FAMILY ORIGIN IN GERMANY

[Interview 1: May 16, 1985] ##

Dorfman: I understand that your family can be traced back at least four generations, some two hundred years in Germany. What stories do you recall of your family's beginning?

Fromm: Well, there is the founding of the wine business in our family by my great-grandfather Nathan. I think it is covered in the previous business interview with Mrs. Teiser. I did not know him, neither did I know my grandfather because he died very early, in his early forties.

Dorfman: And your father became an apprentice. It must have been difficult for him at such an early age.

Fromm: Well, the business was small and my grandfather was apparently quite a wise man who insisted that my father get a good education and training in the wine business. After his father died, he was sent to Bingen-on-the-Rhine and served his apprenticeship in a very large firm, in fact the same firm where I served my apprenticeship. The name of the firm was Feist and Reinach.

After he had served a three-year apprenticeship, he started to develop the business. There were two older sisters and they were not married and needed a dowry. So my father did not marry until much later in his life because first, as was the custom in Jewish families in those days, the dowry had to be provided for his two sisters. After they were married, my father was married to my mother.

This symbol indicates that a tape or segment of a tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes, see page 163.

Dorfman: What effect did your grandfather's death at such an early age have on your grandmother?

Fromm: I didn't know her either. You know, in those days people didn't live as long as today. Many people died at forty-five or fifty years.

Dorfman: Do you know whether there were agencies at that time to assist families where the husband had passed away, or groups that helped each other?

Fromm: I do not know. And if there were, I'm sure that our family would not have applied to them.

Dorfman: Why was that?

German Jews

Fromm: Well, the way German Jews lived, they were self-reliant and, in some ways, it was considered a shameful thing to ask for help from an agency.

Dorfman: You were going to tell me of how your father met and married your mother.

Fromm: My mother was born in Fischach, which was a village near Augsburg. And it was a well-to-do family. They had a store in the farming country where all the farmers came to buy groceries and material for their clothes, which they made mostly themselves. Then my mother's brothers started a real estate business, and did quite well. The family name was Maier.

Dorfman: Who introduced them?

Fromm: I don't know.

Dorfman: In the previous interview, you spoke of some of the advantages of the German apprenticeship program. What were the disadvantages?

Fromm: There was no particular disadvantage. You know, your family had to pay at the firm where you were apprenticed and you got a thorough education in wine production and then in wine marketing. When you had served your apprenticeship, you knew the business in which you were engagaed and you knew it quite well. No, you didn't have any life experience, but otherwise you had a good solid knowledge. You learn an awful lot in your young years that you don't learn later on.

Anti-Semitism

Dorfman: Do you know anything of your grandparents' experiences or your great-grandparents' experiences with anti-Semitism?

Fromm: I have no direct knowledge of that. At the time my grandfather and my great-grandfather lived, they could not move into the cities. There were a lot of restrictions on Jewish people. It was not until 1869 and 1870 that the Jews in Germany received the rights of full citizenship. Then, they could move freely around. For instance, in Bavaria where we lived--it was in the province of Franconia and was part of the state of Bavaria. There were certain places before 1870 where only the first-born male member could marry because they didn't want a lot of Jewish children to increase the Jewish population. They had to go other places in order to get married. There were other restrictions at that time which were removed after 1870.

The Jews of Germany were disadvantaged and had many difficulties in making a living. But then from 1870 on--this was the year of the Prussian-French War, when Chancellor Bismarck ran the country--things got considerably better. Between 1870 and 1933 was really the time where the status of the German Jews developed. They made very large contributions to the German economy, to science and medicine and to the arts of all sorts: music, literature, the performing arts. And then, when the Nazis came in 1933, that all stopped.

Dorfman: And your father in his early years before 1933?

Fromm: My father was born in 1870, which was already a better time for the Jewish people in Germany. There was always an undercurrent of anti-Semitism in Germany. It still exists today. But it had not that horrible form that later developed under the Nazis.

Dorfman: Yes, you said that anti-Semitism always existed in Germany, but that you could live a decent life.

Fromm: Yes, I remember when we went to school, there was always on a Thursday, a special lesson on Jewish religion where the Jewish children went. We went down there--and I remember it like today--we had to pass a junk yard. It was owned by some miserable people, the lowest of the low. And they always taunted us. One day, at that time I think I was about thirteen years old, one of those young rowdies attacked one of my friends. I got so enraged that I attacked him back even though he was much stronger and older than I. I had such fury in me that I wrestled him down and beat him up. I must have had the strength of three people because I was so furious.

Fromm: From that time on when we passed by every Thursday, there never was another incident. But those things existed.

Dorfman: And these attacks were not too frequent?

Fromm: No. But there was always a separation. There was a certain Christian elite that did not socially associate with Jewish people. However, it did not exist that much in our case because our business had developed very fast and between 1920 and 1930 became one of the largest wine businesses in Germany. My father was an active supervisor of the city of Kitzingen and highly regarded. We had a franchise as suppliers to the king of Bavaria. It was called Hoflieferant and was given only to people who were very well thought of. Later on my father got the title of Commerzienrat (Councilor of Commerce), which was a high title given to Jewish people only if they had really contributed to the German economy and were of high repute. Of course, later on it didn't make any difference. I mean, a Jew was a Jew.

Dorfman: What can you tell me about this letterhead? [holds N. Fromm letterhead.]

Fromm: This is the letterhead of a letter which was written in 1918 by my father to his former partner, his widowed sister, Grete. On the top it says, "Wine shippers and Vintners." In the middle is our residence in the Bismarckstrasse, on the right. Then on the left it shows the larger building which were the offices and also where my aunt lived. The buildings in back were the shipping and storage facilities. And then underground were a few miles of cellars.

Dorfman: A few miles?

Fromm: Yes. As our business grew so rapidly, we leased quite a few additional underground cellars. On the left side, you have the cellars owned by a Catholic church organization. Then underneath, there is the shipping room. On the right side you have the main cellar which was under the building that is shown on the letterhead. Underneath there was a big cellar, where very large quantities of bottled wines were stored. It says on the stationery that the firm of N. Fromm was a supplier to the king of Bavaria, that the firm was founded in 1864. That means it was registered in 1864, but the family was in the wine business long before.

On the left side, it states the various places where we had cellars: in Kitzingen, in Grosslangheim which is Franconian wine country, and then in Buedesheim which is right next to Bingen in the Rhineland. It also states that we were supplier to the German Ministry for consumption in the then German Colonies. For a Jewish firm, this was quite a recognition, but we had the quality and the reputation.

Weingrosshandlung u. Weinbau

Te eg - Adr
OMM WORTHSTRASSE KITZINGEN.
TELEPHON No 62
TSCHECKKONTO NÜRNBERG 1420

GIRO-CONTO
BEI DER REICHSBANK
UND BAYER. NOTENBANK
CONTO: DEUTSCHE BANK,
FILIALE NÜRNBERG

KITZINGEN
GROSSLANGHEIM
BÜDESHEIM
AM SCHARLACHBERG

LIEFERANT FÜR DAS
REICHSKOLONIALAMT BERLIN

Haubnisschein Nr 53 der Zulassungs-
elle Kitzingen a. M. vom 2. Sept. 1916
r den Handel mit Wein u. Spirituosen

Kitzingen a/M.
Wörthstrasse.
den 19

B e s t ä t i g u n g !

Im Nachgange zu dem unterm 21. Februar 1918 datierten Auseinandersetzungs-Vetrag zwischen Frau Grete Fromm und Herrn Max Fromm, Kitzingen/Main, übernimmt letzterer noch für das Geschäftsjahr 1918 eine monatliche Vergütung von Zweitausend Mark, für die persönlichen Bedürfnisse der Frau Grete Fromm.

Diese Summe ist jeweils am ersten eines jeden Monats dem Bankhaus S. Moschland, Kitzingen/Main auf Konto der Frau Grete Fromm, Kitzingen, zu überweisen.

Kitzingen/Main, den 22. Februar 1918.

The Max Fromm Family

The Role of Religion

Dorfman: What was the role of religion in your family?

Fromm: Well, my mother came from an Orthodox family. My father did not. We did not keep, later, a kosher house, but there were certain things which never came to the house. That was pork or ham and it was not considered acceptable. But otherwise, we did not really have a very Jewish kitchen.

Dorfman: Your family lived within an area populated mostly by Jews?

Fromm: No, no. There was no ghetto in that sense any more. My father dealt with quite a few prominent gentile businessmen, because he had a fine reputation and had built a very high-class and large business. Our house was located in the best part of town.

Dorfman: Were your parents members of Jewish organizations?

Fromm: Yes, they were members of the temple, of course. The only temple was Orthodox. It was a small town where we lived, Kitzingen. There were only about seven thousand people. However, the temple was completely destroyed in the Kristalnacht by the Nazis.

Dorfman: Did your family attend services at the synogogue?

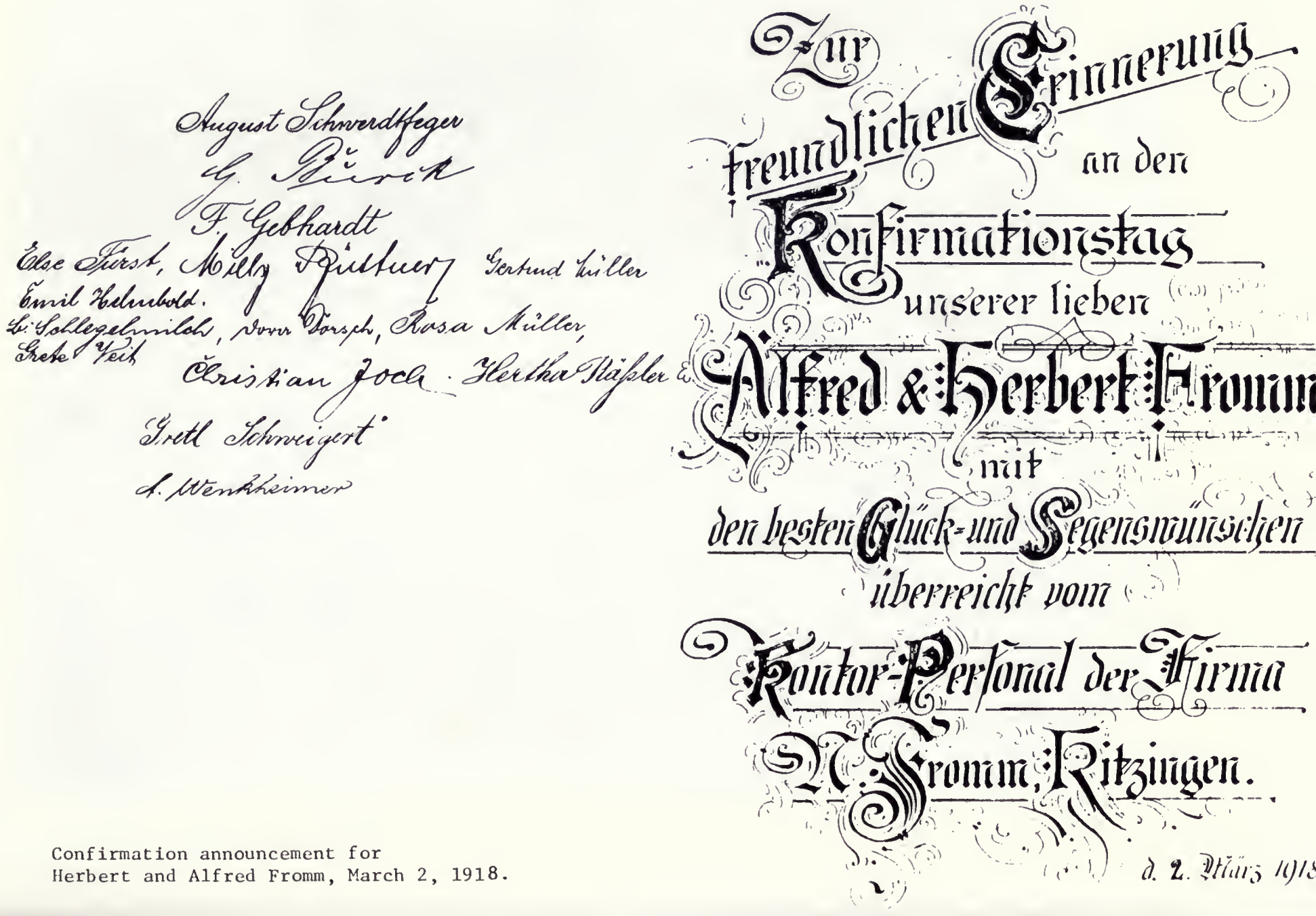
Fromm: Yes, of course. We had Bar Mitzvah there. My twin brother and I, and my older brother, and my younger brother. That was understood--we observed the High Holidays. My mother went more often to temple on Saturday, but it was an Orthodox temple and the women had to sit upstairs.

Dorfman: How about observances at home?

Fromm: Well, there was really no particular observance of Jewish law. My father travelled widely. However, on the High Holidays, of course, the business was closed.

Dorfman: Did your mother light candles on Friday evenings?

Fromm: Yes, she did. But in later years she did not any more. She died, unfortunately, at an early age. I think she was forty-three or forty-four. She died in 1920 on July 15. I was at that time fifteen years old. It was the same day when we graduated, my twin brother and I, from middle high school.



August Schwerdtfeger
G. Bürck
F. Gebhardt
Else Fürst, Milly Büttner, Gertrud Müller
Emil Helmbold.
L. Schlegelmilch, Dora Dorsch, Rosa Müller,
Grete Veit
Christian Joch. Hertha Käßler
Gretl Schweigert
A. Wenkheimer

Zur freundlichen Erinnerung an den Konfirmationstag unserer lieben Alfred & Herbert Fromm mit den besten Glück- und Segenswünschen überreicht vom Kontor-Personal der Firma N. Fromm, Kitzingen.

d. 2. März 1918

Confirmation announcement for
Herbert and Alfred Fromm, March 2, 1918.

Fromm: Everything was prepared for graduation day. We had those pseudo-student's outfits. Then, of course, we couldn't go. I did however give the valedictory speech at school thanking the teachers. It was a day before my mother's funeral, and we refrained from any other activities. At graduation time, we could invite a girl, even though we didn't know what to do with a girl--we were fifteen years old--it was a different time. [laughter] So we missed the fun part of graduation.

Mother

Fromm: She was a wonderful and very charitable woman. For many years we helped our mother to prepare baskets of food which were delivered to poor people, gentile and Jewish. My mother was highly regarded in the community as a very kind and fine person. She looked very German, blue-eyed and a natural blonde.

Brothers and Sisters

Fromm: My twin brother, Herbert--he's about half a head taller than I am--he was also blue-eyed and blond and looks very German, too. Nobody would ever think that he was Jewish by his looks.

He later became a conductor, composer and organist. My father, however, insisted that he first serve an apprenticeship in the wine business because he felt to become a musician at that time was not a proper profession, particularly in a small town. However, he went with him to Munich to the Akademie der Musik, which was a very prominent institution in Germany, and talked to the head of the academy and said, "Well, if my son is really gifted then I will let him study music." And they told him, "Yes, he is." Then Herbert studied for a few years at the Academy of Music in Munich. But it was not until 1933 that his musical education was finished and after a little while, in 1934, he lost his job as a conductor. Then in 1935, he was the first one that I arranged to come to the United States.

He first was musical director of the temple in Buffalo, New York, and for thirty-three years, until he retired, the musical director of the most prominent Temple Israel in Boston. And he has composed and published quite some liturgical and secular music, becoming a first rate organist. He is well known amongst Jewish composers, and was awarded the Ernest Bloch Award for his cantata, "Song of Miriam." He was awarded for his work an honorary doctor's degree from Lesley College in Cambridge,

Mathilde Maier Fromm

Photograph by Gabriel Moulin Studios

Fromm: Massachusetts, where he lived. He's now retired. However, they always call him on the High Holidays, and for any special goings on. He's very highly thought of by the community in Boston and Jewish musical circles.

Dorfman: The relationship between a pair of twins must have been very special. Were you very close?

Fromm: Yes, we were. My brother is a very intelligent person. He had in school nothing but A's including gymnastics and singing. [laughter] He was very spunky, too. He was a good sportsman. If any one tried to attack us they were very careful because my brother could handle it very easily, much better than I, because I was in some way handicapped. When I was thirteen years old, just before I was Bar Mitzvah, I broke my ankle completely and was on crutches for a long time.

You know in those days, there wasn't much of an issue if a boy broke a leg or his ankle. I was incapacitated for about six months, but professors from the school where we went came to the house and I had private tutoring. However, when I was Bar Mitzvah in 1918, I still couldn't walk. An uncle of mine who was a lieutenant in the German army, this was during World War I, carried me up to the pulpit and I said what was called my parsha. Parsha, you know, is part of the Torah. So everybody was very much touched.

Dorfman: I'm sure, but how did you feel about that?

Fromm: Well, I took it in stride. I broke my ankle on the day where my mother said we shouldn't go sleigh riding. And then we hit a big rock and I had a complete severing of my ankle. My right foot is about an inch shorter. But when you are young, those things somehow adjust themselves and it really didn't give me too much trouble for a long time. I could go skiing later on and walk very easily. Even today, at eighty years old, I can walk for an hour or two in the mountains or anywhere else. So, I was quite lucky. As I get older it sometimes hurts me, and I have to restrict my walking.

Dorfman: What else might you remember of your relationship with your twin brother, Herbert?

Fromm: Well, he helped me very much in my school work. We had read a great deal of the German classics when we were young. You know, in those days there was no radio, no television. We played during the day and after school until dark. Then we went home and did our schoolwork. Even though I was very good in German, I had some trouble with geometry and physics. My twin brother always helped me. I had quite good grades, too, but not as good as my brother's. I always looked to him for help when needed. So, it was a very close relationship.

Dorfman: And your other brothers?

Fromm: My oldest brother was called Neander. But when he came to this country in 1937, he called himself Norman, because nobody had ever heard of the name of Neander, which was a Latin name. We twins went only to middle high school, and left school when we were fifteen. But my brother Norman went the full term to the gymnasium for another three years, and then later attended the university in Wuerzburg. He became a successful lawyer later on in Frankfurt. When the Nazis came, he came in 1938 over here with his family. He lived first in Hollywood for some time and was working in the film industry because his wife was born a Laemmle. Mr. Carl Laemmle was an uncle of hers, and was one of the great pioneers in the Hollywood movie business. But it wasn't what Norman really wanted to do. After some years in the shipping business in New York he came back later to San Francisco and joined me in the firm as an executive, and was of great help in the development of our business.

Dorfman: And your younger brother?

Fromm: My younger brother Paul, who is two years younger, was a very sensitive boy. He was highly intelligent, greatly interested in music and in art. When he immigrated to the United States in 1937, too, he came to Chicago where I had arranged a place for him in the wine import business. He joined a firm there and later bought it. We pooled our resources and he became a successful wine importer. He founded, about twenty years ago, the Fromm Music Foundation which is now at Harvard University. It is the leading institute in the U.S.A. fostering only serious modern music and composers. Anyone who knows anything about serious modern music would know the name of Paul Fromm.

He's now retired. He sold his business but still works there to give them a hand. But his main interest is modern music and he has done a great deal for it. He has written many articles and given dozens of interviews in the New York Times and other leading newspapers, because he is the leading force in modern music in the U.S.A. He has received two honorary doctorates for his work and is very well known.

##

Fromm: I am particularly close to my younger brother Paul. He is an intellectual, the same as my brothers Herbert and Norman.

Dorfman: Tell me about that.

Fromm: He suffered particularly from my mother's death, at which time he was thirteen years old. Paul had in some way a tougher time than I because he was so very sensitive. I always tried to give him a

Fromm: hand in the family because in a small town in those days, being so interested in music and the arts was considered a luxury. My father was not very happy about it, but this was, in those days, you know, a different thing than today.

Dorfman: So, you were protective of your younger brother?

Fromm: Yes.

Dorfman: Where did your family's interest in music and art stem from?

Fromm: I really don't know. My father, who had a limited formal education, was an unusually intelligent and well-informed man, a very hard worker. It was necessary in those days in Germany to make a success. My mother was, like most women, more open to the arts and music. But she didn't play any instruments.

I was less interested because I always felt a little bit inferior to my brothers, because they knew things that I did not. Even when I was very young I always wanted to go into the wine business. It interested me greatly and I felt to make up for that, I had to be good in what I was doing in business. I think it was a great incentive to me to prove to myself and to others that I could accomplish something.

Dorfman: That's interesting that you were competing with yourself as well as--

Fromm: Yes, yes. Well, all my life, what little I have been able to do in my life, I really have done it to prove myself. I always said to myself, "I want to see if I can do it." It's like going up a big ladder. You always want to go up a few steps higher, higher--to see how high you can go. That has been very important in my life.

Dorfman: Did your family attend concerts?

Fromm: Music was mostly performed in our home because we lived in a small town where very little was offered. In those days, the arts in small towns were not very much appreciated. But we had a great deal of it in our house, all good friends, quite a few of them non-Jewish. There was always music, and great discussions about philosophy, politics, the arts and paintings and about many books. We all are bookworms. Everyone in our family reads a great deal.

I never listened in school in Germany to grammar because I knew it. We read most of the classics, and a lot of other books, too. Spelling and grammar were never any problem for me in German. It was considered a disgrace if you didn't know the proper grammar and the right spelling. Grammar in Germany is sometimes a little bit involved and difficult. We all were good at expressing ourselves writing in German.

Dorfman: Which books were favorites of your family?

Fromm: Well, they were all the classics, like Goethe, Schiller, Heinrich Heine. There were many others, Shakespeare, of course. We read them pretty solemnly and we had, I think, substantial knowledge for young people of the German classics.

Dorfman: You said that you were one of seven brothers and sisters.

Fromm: Yes, four brothers and one sister and then two step-sisters. Margaret Meyer and the other one of my step-sisters was Joan Maier.

Dorfman: Now, Margaret Meyer was married to Otto Meyer.

Fromm: Otto was associated with me in the Fromm and Sichel, Incorporated, and he became the president of our subsidiary, Paul Masson in Saratoga, California. Under his guidance it grew to be an important factor in the California premium wine and champagne business. He has been retired since approximately 1977.

Joan Maier was maried to Bernhardt Maier, who was my late mother's youngest brother. He was associated with my brother Paul in Chicago for many years and a star salesman. For my young years he introduced me to the art of selling fine wines in Germany. Both, unfortunately, are not alive any more, and neither is my blood sister Friedel.

##

Fromm: Even though I left school when I was fifteen years old, I think I had in many ways a better education than many of the young people here of nineteen. There was no television, there was no radio in those days and our pleasure and endeavor was to read as much as possible. Besides the classics, we also read a lot of junk books, like the Indian books of Carl May. They were fabulous. He was a German school teacher, he never was in America, and he wrote the most fascinating books about American Indians. And these were read by all of us and our friends.

We had a big house. So there were often interesting discussions, sometimes violent discussions, of whatever went on. And so, in this way, I think all of us were exposed to a lot of information and problems.

Dorfman: Political problems?

Fromm: Yes, political problems, and social and economic problems, too.

Dorfman: And there was a great deal of music played in your home and in the garden by friends as well as your brothers.

Fromm: Yes.

Dorfman: In terms of the role of art, you said that you had many discussions at home. Did your family have an art collection in your home?

Fromm: No, we didn't. We had some very good artworks that my father or mother had acquired over the years. It was a very busy house, a business house.

Dorfman: And museum visits?

Fromm: Yes. There was no museum in the town where we lived, but later on when we traveled throughout Germany and later abroad for the business, we also visited museums in London, in Paris, in Denmark, in Czechoslovakia, and wherever we were.

Dorfman: To come back to your relationships within your family, tell me about your sister.

Fromm: Well, we only had one sister. Her name was Friedel. When she, her husband, and two sons came to the United States, they had no money. She made hats for great society ladies in New York. She was very gifted. She had to contribute to the funds of the family because her husband had a hard time relocating. He came from one of the best known Jewish families in Berlin.

Our sister lived with us when my mother died in 1920. She ran the house for a few years and then she got married. She was a beautiful and kind woman. In fact, she was almost a do-gooder. [laughter] When we had immigrated to the United States, she kept in touch with other parts of the family. She was the one who knew everybody. I must say, to my disadvantage, I was not particularly interested in the cousins and second cousins. But even so, we were able to help them sometimes when the need arose. That is self-understood in a Jewish family.

Dorfman: And to whom was this sister married?

Fromm: She was married to Bruno Israel in Berlin. The Israel family was the founder of that large department store, N. Israel. And they became immensely wealthy. My brother-in-law's father already became a gentleman farmer because there was a lot of money and they had a big farm right outside of Berlin. He grew up in great wealth. He later changed his name when he came to America to Fromm because he felt he would be more easily accepted.

Dorfman: And speaking of cousins, I wanted, of course, to ask about your memories of your second cousin, Erich Fromm.

Fromm: Well, my oldest brother Norman, who studied in Munich where Erich Fromm studied, too, was very close to him. We were not that close because when we came to the United States, he lived at that time in Mexico. But he visited with us in our home.

I remember one day when Erich gave a lecture here, he came for dinner, in 1965. My son was, at that time, a resident at the medical school of University of California and he just had to see that famous man. He expected great things, and all Erich was asking was, "Well, how's cousin so-and-so? And what happened to aunt so-and-so?" So he really wanted to know what happened to the whole family. It was a very amusing thing.

He gave a talk at San Francisco State University. At that time it wasn't yet called a university. There were a lot of young people and my wife took him by the arm. They were walking along and some young woman came and said, "Master, what is the ultimate?" And he said, "There is no ultimate." And she said, "Thank you master." [laughter] That was the answer.

He was a psychologist of great repute and a very sensible person. I think he had a decided influence throughout the world and on a very sound basis. And yet, when we talked to him, he was a warm and regular person. His books made him world famous.

Dorfman: Had you known each other well as children?

Fromm: No, we didn't. His family lived in Frankfurt, which was some distance away. Today, we wouldn't consider this a distance but in those days it was. We knew his father and his mother. Our parents and his parents visited, but we really met him only later in life. They were in the apple wine business in Frankfurt. We were in the real wine business. So, there was some contact there professionally.

Childhood

Dorfman: Going on with your childhood in Germany, I would like to know what memories you have of how your home looked.

Fromm: Well, we had a very nice house, at first in Kitzingen, with a large garden. Then in 1928, as our firm had rapidly developed, we bought one of the largest underground cellars in Germany in Bingen-on-the-Rhine. The main seat of the firm was moved from Kitzingen to Bingen-on-the-Rhine. I can show you a picture of our large home. Our family became quite wealthy because my father was, as I mentioned, a very excellent and far sighted businessman. When enormous inflation in Germany came, almost everybody was

Fromm: wiped out. However, my father felt that we should start in the early 1930s in the export business, and we did. During inflationary years, we had a branch of the firm and a depot of our wines in Holland, in Amsterdam; in London; in Prague, Czechoslovakia, and Saarbrucken, which was in the German Saarland and was occupied by the French for some years in the 1930s. Our sales in foreign countries produced substantial earnings in foreign exchange, and when the German mark was stabilized, the firm of N. Fromm was financially very strong.

Dorfman: Coming back to your home, what it was like to grow up in that house as a child in Kitzingen?

Fromm: We had a happy home life when we grew up in Kitzingen. We had big gardens where we played. We had many friends from all over who went to school with us or from families we knew, Jewish and non-Jewish. It was a good way to grow up. We had a lot of fun. I would say there were no particular difficulties that I recall.

Dorfman: Who helped your mother in the house?

Fromm: Well, we always had a cook and a house maid, and someone came in for the washing. There was plenty of help. I know when I came to the United States and I had to take the garbage out, I would say to my wife, "What did we do in Germany with the garbage? I never saw it."

Dorfman: And each child had his own bedroom?

Fromm: When we were small we shared bedrooms. Of course, my sister had her own room and also my oldest brother. But my twin brother and I, we slept in one large room for some years and so did my youngest brother. But later on, we all had our own rooms. When we moved to Bingen, we had a very big house, a much bigger house than we had in Kitzingen. A beautiful view of the Rhine, it was really a very outstanding place.

Dorfman: When you were young, did the family travel a great deal on trips or vacations?

Fromm: My parents did and my father went every year to take the cure. This was a habit in Germany. Then later on when we grew up, when I served my apprenticeship and later on, all of us children--independently--travelled extensively. We went to Switzerland and to Italy and to many other places in Europe.

Dorfman: When you were still at home, you said that life was very happy for a child growing up within your family. Were there many family parties and social events?

Fromm: No, really not. There were, of course, the family parties, all the holidays, and on Sunday there was always a big meal. Everybody was there and there was something very special, particularly good food. So, it was very much enjoyed. We always had wine. As children we always got a little drop of wine with some water. Because we always were exposed to this, I think that none of us is a drinker. And well, if you are in the business as I was in all my life, then you know what it means to drink too much. This is something that has never bothered anyone in our family.

Dorfman: So, with such a large family, it wasn't difficult for Sunday meals to become family events?

Fromm: Yes, and then always some of our friends were invited. There were always twelve, fifteen people at the table. It was a very festive meal and everyone enjoyed it.

Dorfman: During the week, were all meals eaten together?

Fromm: No, breakfast we had by ourselves because we all had to go to school. But lunch was always taken together. That was really the big meal during the day. There was a lighter meal in the evening, but it was always done in the family circle. As long as we were all home, we always had our meals together with our parents.

Parents' Expectations and Values

Dorfman: What did your parents expect of you?

Fromm: My father was success-oriented, but as I mentioned before, he was also a very charitable man. He expected that we do well, whatever it was. After we served our apprenticeship, as I mentioned, I then came back to work in our family's firm and so did later my brother Paul, my younger brother. It was always expected that we would do a good job because my father was a pretty tough task master. He put quite some requirements on us because he was a man who had accomplished very much by himself under tremendous odds.

Dorfman: And your mother. What was her expectation of you?

Fromm: My mother just wanted to see that everything went along well. She took great interest in our education when we were small and helped us where she could, and also showed us that one had to do things for other people.

Dorfman: So, it was your mother who--

Fromm: --was a generous person. My father was a very charitable man in a very large way, as soon as he could afford to do it. But my mother really instilled in all of us that idea that one had to do something for others, and that out of all the bounty and all of the fruits of our labors, there should be something for other people.

Dorfman: How were your parents' expectations different for the other family members than they were for you?

Fromm: I remember when I was about nineteen, twenty years old, I started to travel for the firm, all over the country. My father had certain ideas: Number one, we could not call on any old customers. We only could call on new customers, which was difficult. Secondly, we were paid a commission, but he thought according to German education principles we only were paid half of what other people got, because he thought his sons should not make that kind of money. However, I did make good money anyway. Of course, I really applied myself to it.

Dorfman: What was important to your parents?

Fromm: Well, it was important that we lead a respected and honorable life, that we would do a good job in whatever our profession was. That we should help other people where it made good sense. My father was not a do-gooder. But he spread his charities where he thought it would do some good. He helped many people to set up in business or made it possible for them to make a better living. He was the paterfamilias of the extended family.

Dorfman: During World War I, were any of your family members in the German army?

Fromm: Yes, some uncles of mine. Yes, one was a lieutenant. The other served in the army. My mother's youngest brother was killed in France during the First World War.

Dorfman: What was the attitude of the family?

Fromm: Well, we were probably better Germans than Jews at that time. Most of the Jews were very patriotic Germans.

Dorfman: Do you recall stories about the experiences in the army of family members at that time?

Fromm: I remember vividly when World War I started, one day I saw my mother on the steps of our house. She was crying bitterly, and I asked, "Well, what is it?" Look at all these big victories the Germans had. She said, "No, this will be the end of the world we know." I didn't understand this for many, many years.

Added Reflections on Background and Family

Dorfman: Did anyone in your family speak or understand Yiddish?

Fromm: No.

Dorfman: Were there other languages in which your family was fluent?

Fromm: Not fluent, but, of course, we were taught French and English. At the gymnasium, my oldest and youngest brother were taught Latin and Greek, however in a limited way.

Dorfman: When you attended school, were you taught languages?

Fromm: Yes, we were taught French and English. But before I came here, I went for a month to Cambridge in England and lived with a professor there. There was nothing but English spoken. So, when I came over here to do business at the time Prohibition was repealed in December, 1933, I had a working knowledge of English. I could get along.

Advice From Rabbi Stephen Wise

Dorfman: I'd like to go on to the years of Hitler. You mentioned that you met Rabbi Stephen Wise when you were in this country.

Fromm: Well, I arrived in New York on December 5, 1933, the day Prohibition was repealed. As I was the oldest son in the business, I was delegated to open the American market.

I found out one thing, that if I wanted to ask someone for directions, I always addressed myself to well-dressed and nice looking people because they really gave me better information, and they talked to strangers more easily because many are people who've traveled. Whereas, if you talked to the average person, you know, he just had no time and ran away.

So, I had quite some experiences because my English was very spotty, but I got along. I started to call on the large wholesale distributors in order to distribute our wines as was necessary under the license system that existed here. And a lot of the distributors here were Jewish and they wouldn't buy any German wine. They said, "We are not buying any German wine because this only helps the Nazis." So, I pleaded with them and said, "Well, you know that we are Jewish and the fact that we are exporting and bringing foreign exchange into Germany, that protects our family."

Fromm: And in fact, it did, because some of the lowest class Nazis, the Brown Shirts, took my father to a concentration camp in 1934 for a week. But then we intervened with the German Reichsbank, which was the same as the Federal Reserve Bank here. Dr. Schacht was the president of the Reichsbank. He was also the one who stabilized the German mark after the inflation. At his instruction, my father was released. He was so important because we had a fairly large export business of German wines.

But in New York, I found it very difficult with so many distributors and I really got desperate. I said, well, what do I do, because they wouldn't buy anything from us because it was German goods. They said to me, "Alfred, you're a nice young man. Why don't you go into something else? But we don't buy German goods."

[Interview 2: July 19,1985]

Fromm: So, I asked, "Who is the most prominent Jew in New York?" They told me the most prominent and the most influential Jew in New York was Rabbi Stephen Wise. I called him and he gave me an appointment.

He was a very imposing man, and spoke beautiful German. And I told him my story. He said, "Alfred, I will give you one piece of advice. All the Jews in Germany will leave with a pack on their back. This is just the beginning. Get out as fast as you can. Take out whatever money you can." This was very dangerous. My father would never violate the law. He didn't permit us to take any money out.

Dorfman: He didn't?

Fromm: No, no, it was against the law. German Jews were very patriotic and very law abiding, as most Germans were. And Rabbi Wise said, "Take your family out as quickly as you can because this will be a horrible end in Germany." Now this was in January or February of 1934. At that time, almost everybody thought that Nazi business would blow over and settle down to something reasonable.

I took his advice and as I told you my twin brother came out first in 1935, and then all the rest of the family. When we immigrated, we brought out altogether, thirty-seven people, our immediate family. And we are one of the very few Jewish families whose immediate family all live in the United States. We are not dispersed all over the world. So, this is one of the reasons we are so grateful to the United States, for giving us a home and giving us a chance.

Fromm: After I emigrated, I still sold quite a bit of German wine because my parents were still living there until I got them out. The same day my parents were out, I completely stopped any contact with Germany. That was finished for me. But as I told many of my friends who were in the same position as I, "You know you are making a great mistake. You have such tremendous hatred against the Nazis which I fully understand. But it eats you up. It's something destructive." I said, "I've made up my mind. I just despise the Nazis, but I do not permit myself this hatred because this will hinder me in what I need to do here, to get roots in American soil."

Dorfman: That's a fine philosophy.

Fromm: Well, it's also a practical philosophy.

Dorfman: Did Rabbi Wise, when you consulted with him, assist you at all?

Fromm: No, he just gave me that advice. And when we had been in the country for about four years--I kept in touch with Rabbi Wise--I sent him a thousand dollars because Rabbi Wise gave me such valuable counsel. I felt so strongly that I would like to show my appreciation--and in those days this thousand dollars was like a fortune to me--that I had to do something important to acknowledge his invaluable advice to me.

Dorfman: Tell me about that relationship that you maintained with Rabbi Wise.

Fromm: Well, I called on him from time to time and got advice from him. He was an outstanding, intelligent man. Then after he died, I had some contact with his daughter, Justice Wise Politzer.

Dorfman: What was Rabbi Wise's role at the time that you knew him?

Fromm: Well, he was the first Rabbi at the largest temple in New York City. He was very active politically. He was the most prominent Jew at that time in New York. That's why I called on him.

II LEAVING GERMANY PERMANENTLY, 1936

Dorfman: I would like to return to your immigration to the United States. We know from previous interviews with you that you traveled to the United States between 1933 and 1936, you decided to leave Germany to live here permanently. That decision was brought about, of course, by the--

Fromm: --by the situation the Nazis created. We had made up our minds to immigrate as soon as we could, but I couldn't manage it before 1936.

Marriage to Hanna Gruenbaum

Fromm: My wife and I came to this country in 1936. We were just married.

Dorfman: Yes, tell me about the marriage.

Fromm: Well, I wanted to get married earlier. My wife is about nine years younger than I am. However, I couldn't under the circumstances with the Nazis, because my wife had already immigrated and at that time she lived with her mother in Palestine. At the time, Israel was not yet a nation.

We got married in 1936 and I sent her a cable to Jerusalem. I wanted to go there and then we would take our honeymoon on a trip down the Nile. However, then the riots broke out in Palestine: shooting between the English, Israelis and the Arabs. I cabled that she should meet me in Trieste, which she did. But when she arrived in Trieste, Italy, with her mother, I wasn't there because I couldn't get my passport. So, I came about a week later.

We went to the rabbi and we were married in a religious ceremony. I went back to the United States on business and Hanna went back to London where she had an uncle with whom she lived.

Fromm: Then we went to Prague to visit an uncle of hers who was a professor at the German university in Prague. He was an ultra-Orthodox Jew. When I arrived there he asked about our marriage ceremony. I hemmed and I hawed because there was no chupah at that time--our marriage was not done in the Orthodox tradition. He said, "Well, there is no blessing and no good fortune in a marriage like that for the granddaughter of Abraham Gruenbaum." My wife's grandfather was a very prominent Orthodox person. He was one of the main founders of Share Zedak Hospital in Jerusalem in the year 1890.

So we got married again in a very Orthodox way. After that we went to New York.

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Fromm: As soon as I arrived, I wanted to file for my first papers to become a citizen. I went to an attorney and he asked, "Where is your marriage certificate?" So, I showed him those two scrolls in Hebrew. He said, "That's no good in New York. It's considered a common law marriage. You have to have a civil marriage. Otherwise, for five years it will not have the same legal standing."

I figured this was not very good. So, one day we went down to City Hall. There were maybe thirty couples in front of us and finally, our turn came. After it was over, the man who performed the ceremony looked at his list and said, "Hanna, how does it feel to be Mrs. Fromm?" And he said to me, "You can kiss the bride," which I did. It was no hardship. And he stuck his hand out. To me as a German, you know, to give an official a tip, I thought would be a criminal thing to do. But fortunately, my witness was an American boy who came forward with two dollars and gave it to him which in those days was a lot more money than it is today. So we were married actually three times. But now we are married fifty years.

Dorfman: Congratulations on the success of your marriage. So, your brother, Herbert, and then you and your wife came to New York. Who followed?

Fromm: My oldest brother, Norman, with his wife and his child followed. Then my brother-in-law, Otto Meyer, who married my step-sister Margaret and his child came. Afterwards, my sister and her husband and two boys came, one after the other. Between 1936 and 1938, everybody came as quickly as they could get their visas. The ones who came last were my parents because for a long time my father resisted immigrating. He said, "That Nazi business cannot last for a long time." He was such a prominent man in our industry and so well known that he felt it could not be meant for him.

Fromm: But then, of course, he saw what happened. We finally got them out, but we couldn't get them to the United States at that time because the war had already broken out in 1941. This was, I think, in 1940 or 1941. Then he and mother went to England and were there during the Blitz. Then they couldn't, however, cross the ocean because it was too dangerous on account of the German U-boats. They went from England to South America. And with quite some effort we got them out of South America to come here. At that time it was very difficult to get visas. But he was such an outstanding wine expert and the wine industry was very young. So, he came with a special visa as the wine expert that he really was.

Dorfman: His expertise was really--

Fromm: --very valuable and very helpful to us in the development of our business.

Dorfman: And that was in 1940 that your parents first went to South America? Then in '41 they arrived in San Francisco?

Fromm: No, they stayed in England for some time, and I think they arrived here in 1942.

Dorfman: That arrival must have been a very joyous one.

Fromm: Yes. My father couldn't take any money out of Germany, but by that time, my brothers and I were already settled to some extent. So, we saw to it that they had what they needed. He was a very frugal man, a very charitable man, but very frugal for himself.

Dorfman: You made a statement that comes to mind at this point: that your education in Germany prepared you, in a way, to be financially conservative. What did you mean by that?

Fromm: Well, the German way was, first, you don't buy anything if you don't have the cash. The second thing is, you don't incur any personal debt. You can do it in your business because you have to very often. Or if you buy a house you have a mortgage. But for other things you just don't. You don't buy a car on credit or anything of that sort. That was the way our family was run and I would say almost all the better Jewish families were run in this way in Germany.

Germans basically, at that time, were very conservative people who saved. Money is not being spent in Germany like it is here. It took us a long time to acquire certain possessions here in the United States because we paid cash for them. It's different today with many of the young people here. They want everything and they want it now and too early. But they miss, in some ways, the pleasure and satisfaction of having worked for something--and finally getting it.

Dorfman: Previously you said, "No one does it all by himself."

Fromm: Well, I feel very strongly about this. There are so many people who always say I, I, I have done this and they take all the credit for whatever they accomplish for themselves. I don't believe in that. I believe that you have to work very hard, that you have to know your business, that you have to be honorable and fair in your dealings. But this is only fifty percent. The other fifty percent you can interpret as you want. I feel that I had the blessings from above. Some people say it's good fortune or whatever it is. I don't ever say that I did this all by myself. It's being there, and at the right time. There are so many circumstances and I never have given my own efforts more than fifty percent of the credit. But this is my personal belief.

After we, my wife and I, came to the U.S.A.--at first, we had no money. So we lived in a very cheap apartment in New York. Then as we prospered a bit, we changed and we moved from New York to Los Angeles for a short time and then from Los Angeles to San Francisco. We first had an apartment here and then we bought a house. Then we built our own house later. So, altogether we moved eight times and unfortunately, some of the materials from home in Germany got lost. In my eagerness to have roots again in our new homeland, I did not understand then the importance of the past.

Dorfman: You also spoke of a burning desire to become a United States citizen.

Fromm: Yes, when we left Germany, we were completely uprooted. It was always my most important goal to have our family have their roots again here. The idea of the wandering Jew is a horrible one to me. We saw those poor people from Russia and Poland when they came to Germany to ask for alms. Later on, of course, this changed when many of those people came to Israel and had such an enormously large part as pioneers in the building of Israel.

Life in New York City

Dorfman: What was it like to live and work--

Fromm: On our arrival in New York, we took a very cheap apartment because we had no money. I found a job right away because I worked here a good part of the time bewteen 1933 and 1936. I found a job with a wine importer, and I started out with twenty-five dollars a week which in those days was not a bad salary, because there were many people who worked for eight or ten dollars a week.

Fromm: After a year I became a small partner in this small wine import firm because I had many contacts throughout the country through my extensive travels before.

Dorfman: The job and the import firm were both connected with wine importing?

Fromm: Yes. I was the only one in the firm who knew something about wine because with fourteen years of Prohibition, of course, there were hardly any American wine experts around. So, I was sent to Europe for the firm to buy wine and make contacts with the wine shippers in Europe. I could see the preparations for war by the Nazis and told my partners that a war was coming, that one day we would be cut off from all our foreign sources and that we'd better look for a domestic source of supply. That's what got me into the California wine business. That was a very fortunate thing.

Those are decisions you make. Whether it was smart or it was good luck--this really is the blessing you receive if you do things right.

Dorfman: Certainly that was visionary. You were living in a small apartment when you came to New York. Where was that apartment?

Fromm: It was on East Fifty-Fifth Street, but it was in a horrible location. It was right next to the El, the elevated subway. Whenever the El came by, which was very frequently, everything shook in the house and you thought it went right through your bedroom. But it was all we could afford. The fact is, even when I made so little money, we always saved a few dollars each week.

Well, we lived very frugally. We had brought from Germany all our clothes. We didn't buy anything for two or three years. It had to do. My wife had worked in haute couture in Paris before. She had beautiful clothes and she was a very pretty girl. So, we had access to very nice people who invited us and helped us with sound advice. The people were really very good to us. That's another reason why I'm such an enthusiastic American. We never asked for anything, of course. We wouldn't have accepted it either. We were complete strangers. Everything was different. You really needed to feel your way. We knew quite a few people who were prominent people in New York and they told us what was the right thing to do.

Dorfman: How long were you in that small apartment?

Fromm: We were there for about six months. And then, after I became a partner in the wine firm, I was making seventy-five dollars a week, which was a princely salary in those days. However, I didn't draw that money. We drew twenty-five, thirty dollars a week, and then maybe later on thirty-five because I wanted to increase my share in the business.

Fromm: For years I drew the minimum to live on, and did accumulate a sizable amount of deferred salaries and from profits. With that I bought shares in the firm and ultimately became a fifty percent share holder, helped with some credit from the Bank of America. This is somehow an "un-American" way because, if many Americans make some money, most of them want to spend it. I felt I'm not going to be an employee, but a business owner.

Dorfman: And that was your way out?

Fromm: Yes. And we never felt poor, from the first day we arrived in the U.S. Never.

Dorfman: Did you then move to Riverside Drive?

Fromm: Yes. We had a better apartment and then our son David was born. We got a two year lease and there was quite some rent concession at that time. It was a fairly low rental. But after the two years were over, they wanted the full price. I didn't think that we could afford that so we moved far out to Riverdale--which I liked very much because we had a view to the river. However, it was a tremendously long subway ride. I had to change a few times. It was almost an hour and during the summer at that time, the subway was not air-conditioned. You know, the way they shoved you in at Times Square, it was cruel.

I said to my wife, "I wasn't born to be a subway rider. I'm going to make a hundred thousand dollars." I could have said I'll make a million or ten million. This was a fabulous amount in those days. [laughter] Because this was was not for me. I said, "I will do whatever is necessary to get out of that." And that was my incentive. I often say the miserable New York subway has done me a lot of good.

Dorfman: [laughter] That's understandable.

Living in San Francisco

Dorfman: And then, of course, we know from previous interviews what brought you to California, the wine industry and your activities in that industry. I would like to ask where you moved first when you came to San Francisco in 1941.

Fromm: I spent a lot of time in San Francisco, and in California in order to build our California business. But we didn't live here at first.

Fromm: We built our house at Seacliff in San Francisco about thirty years ago, and it's quite a little story of good fortune and persistence. When I first came to California from New York, we started to take the agency for the world-wide distribution rights for the Christian Brothers Winery in Napa, California. It is owned by a Roman Catholic order in Rome. I was in San Francisco. I spent a few months in Napa at the winery, at the monastery, as we had not relocated to San Francisco.

One day in 1940 I called my wife in New York and told her she should come out to San Francisco because it would be necessary that we move to San Francisco. Our business developed very rapidly and it was necessary for me to be here because this is where the product originates. So, she came out and I took her out to Seacliff. And there was an old broken down shack where our house is now. But it had the most fabulous view of the Golden Gate Bridge opposite the Golden Gate headlands. I said to her, "Sweetheart, this is where I'm going to build a house as soon as I have the money." About five years later, it was a Sunday and it was my birthday. The real estate broker said to me, "Alfred, you can buy that lot now, but you have to sign on the dotted line because you're dealing with a real nut."

So we signed. The lot was very expensive in those days. It was thirty-five thousand dollars which was a fortune for us. But we bought it. And this is where we built our house. So, what I said to my wife so many years ago finally came through. I sold some land to General Motors who wanted it for their plant. And then we started to build the house with the funds that we had acquired selling our old house, the money that I got from the sale of real estate, and some other funds that I had accumulated. After our house was finished, then I felt--I'm an American citizen, although I had my citizenship papers many years before.

Dorfman: What a feeling!

Fromm: Yes. You see, I come from a land owning, home owning, vineyard owning family. And to me this means a great deal. I felt uncomfortable living in a rented place.

Dorfman: When did you buy that first house? What was the year?

Fromm: The first house at 845 El Camino Del Mar we bought, I think, in 1944.

Dorfman: And you built your present home?

Fromm: Our home we built in 1954.

Dorfman: So you have been living in that home for some time now?

Fromm: Yes, over thirty years.

Dorfman: What was life like in San Francisco for you, your wife and your son?

Fromm: Our son went to public school and did very well. My wife, during the war years, was a Red Cross instructor and a driver. She's an excellent driver. I'm not. We had some occasional help in the house, but she took care of the house, of whatever had to be done. Later on, in 1946 our daughter was born.

Dorfman: And your son was born in 1939?

Fromm: Yes.

Dorfman: What was the city like when you came in 1941?

Fromm: Well, it was very much smaller and much more intimate. We didn't have all those skyscrapers, all those big buildings. The traffic was very normal. It was a very comfortable city. And as I knew the United States so well, San Francisco has been always a place where I felt it would be the best place for us to live. I wouldn't want to live in New Orleans which is a great tourist attraction, but I thought it was a very phoney place. And San Francisco was a very conservative town. We liked it right from the beginning. We liked the view of the Golden Gate Bridge because I grew up on Bingen-on-the-Rhine. We had a large house that overlooked the Rhine River and to me that meant a great deal. So, I felt that was something I really wanted.

While we lived in those days rather frugally, I always felt a good, well built, and comfortable home is most important. When I come home, I don't want to go into some hovel. I feel like I deserve it because I worked so hard for it. This to me was very important: to build and to have my own home.

Dorfman: What was going on in the city in those years, in 1940, politically?

Fromm: Politically?

Dorfman: Yes. Were you involved in politics?

Fromm: No, I never was involved in politics. I've helped some people, but I have no direct involvements in politics.

Dorfman: How about social activities in the city at that time?

Fromm: Well, we knew quite a few of the people who had come from Germany or Austria, too. We became very friendly with some of them. We made some very good friends with some prominent Gentile Americans. So, we had a nice social life. But I always told my wife, and she

Fromm: felt the same as I, the so-called upper crust, they have to come to us first. We are not coming to them. We have strictly stuck to that. We are not social climbers because I consider it complete nonsense and it means absolutely nothing to me. If you have some self-respect and if you want to live your own life, you don't care what other people do.

Dorfman: Were you temple members at that time?

Fromm: Yes, of the Temple Emanu-El.

Dorfman: Who was the Rabbi at that time?

Fromm: The first Rabbi when we came was Alvin Fine. But then Rabbi Asher came and we were very friendly with him. We knew him and Rabbi Fine quite well.

Dorfman: Were you particularly impressed with the rabbis at the Temple Emanu-El?

Fromm: We are not religious Jews. And I must say, even though we were members, we generally went to the Temple only for the High Holidays. Otherwise we didn't, we were not active members. Now Hanna's mother, who lived here, too, she was much more religiously inclined and she went to Temple Emanu-El more often.

III FROMM INSTITUTE FOR LIFELONG LEARNING, UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO, 1975

Dorfman: I would like to ask you about a contribution of much significance, the Fromm Institute in San Francisco.

Plan and Design; Hanna Fromm

Dorfman: You told me that Mrs. Fromm was actually the principal architect of the Fromm Institute. Who designed the structure of the Institute?

Fromm: Well, we took a lot of advice. My wife and I went to Washington and talked with the federal government--the top people in the Department of Education. They told us if we would get ten or fifteen students to start out, that we would do well. Generally, when you get a lot of advice, people mostly tell you what you cannot do.

We talked a great deal with people we knew and we found there was a tremendous need, that many older people had no place to go and were deteriorating very fast. And we talked to a number of professors and some outstanding educators. They all were very much interested in what we were endeavoring to do and gave us a lot of good advice.

We were pretty much settled that something like that had to be done. This was quite new in those days. I'm talking now about twelve, thirteen years ago. We went to various locations and the University of San Francisco was the one that was best located. It's a Jesuit university that has full understanding for the social implication of what we want to do--finding educational opportunities for older people. And they told us that they would assist us in every way, except we couldn't get any money from them whatsoever. But they would make available as their contribution the classrooms, an office, their cafeteria, their reception rooms,

Fromm: and things of that sort which they have done over all those years. But all cash expenses for the professors' salaries and the administration had to be paid by us right from the beginning.

We can use the university's complete organization. For instance, we don't handle any money whatsoever. Everything is paid through the university. We use their computer, but, of course, we have to provide the money.

At that time, Father McInness was president of the University of San Francisco. We were very friendly with him. And finally he said to us, "You know, Alfred and Hanna, if you want to do it, stick your neck out and do it."

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Fromm: But the question was where does the money come from. So, we put in a sizable amount ourselves. Then I talked to some people I knew at Bank of America, some other large companies, and some very wealthy individuals. So, altogether we raised about a hundred thousand dollars at the start, which, in those days, was quite a lot more than it is today.

Dorfman: And that was in what year?

Fromm: It was in '74.

Then we started. There was one large article in the Chronicle on a Sunday about how important this could be, in all a very favorable article. It said there would be open house for people who were interested. When the open house was held two days later, between four and five hundred people came.

It was bedlam. Nobody knew where to seat them. Nobody had anticipated such a response. About three hundred people registered for the courses but it was very difficult to take even seventy-six because we didn't have enough professors and we didn't have the necessary funds for a larger set-up. So, we finally accepted seventy-six people contrary to what the government people had advised--that if we would take ten or fifteen to start, we would do well.

It's not that we were smarter than other people. The time was just right for that. The people who helped us and put up the original money together with our own understood that this was important and should be supported.

Dorfman: But that also was visionary.

Fromm: Well, yes it was something that didn't exist, but we felt very strongly about it. We had some good friends who retired and after a year or two the men died or they got sick. Those people's lives ended because they felt completely useless and they were like fish out of water. People hadn't prepared for retirement.

Dorfman: So, on one hand, an institute such as the Fromm Institute gives a gift to the individual, which the individual returns to the community.

Fromm: Right.

Dorfman: The Fromm Institute for Lifelong Learning; A Guide and a Model, 1982, which you lent to me told much of the beginning. I wonder what else might come to mind.

Fromm: At that time, Mrs. Mishkin, the wife of a professor in Berkeley, and my wife, they ran it together. Mrs. Mishkin was a very experienced and intelligent person. We started and we learned from our mistakes. We had people looking over our shoulders, but we did what we thought was right, and became successful. Today it is the largest institute of its kind in the United States. Many universities have introduced similar courses.

I believe I told you already that we had over a hundred universities and colleges write to us over the last few years. They wanted to know how we did it. They learned about us through the journals of higher education in which the Institute was often mentioned. Of course, we couldn't respond in a letter, we wouldn't have had the personnel. So, that's the way this booklet was designed and it is still sent to everyone who is interested, because we don't take any pride in ownership in having had this idea first. We want it to spread because if it does, then it shows that we have done it right.

Dorfman: It certainly is beautifully done. It's most specific. Were sites other than the University of San Francisco considered for that institution?

Fromm: We did look around, but when we came to the University of San Francisco, we saw that was the ideal place and they wanted us there very badly. So, we felt it would be a good home for us and over the eleven years that the institute has been active, it has proven so.

Dorfman: Why did you feel it would be a good home?

Fromm: Well, it's easily accessible, and many of our students don't drive or don't have a car. So, that was important. The institute appealed to the university very much. So, we felt we would be in good hands even though we are completely independent. We are still on the campus--they are our hosts.

Fromm: So for those students who drive, there has been parking space at a very low rate. And we always have worked well with the top executives, particularly with Father John Lo Schiavo, the university's president.

Dorfman: How has the institute changed over the years?

Fromm: It has, of course, increased its size since we began in 1976. We have added many more additional courses requested by our students. Today, the Fromm Institute is really a small university within a larger university because our courses are on a very high academic level and generally on a much higher level than those offered to the undergraduates. We are attracting an older intelligent group. Anybody can enter, and we have some outstanding people in our student body. So very many older people are lonely or all by themselves, but here, they make new acquaintances. They are together with their peers and they take care of each other. The most important thing to them is that they again lead a structured and meaningful life.

One of the reasons that the institute has developed is the large pool of retired professors on which we can draw from Berkeley, Stanford, San Francisco State University, and others. We have outstanding master teachers, all emeriti professors. For instance, if anyone of the students is sick, then the students, who have their own association, they find out and visit the person. They share transportation wherever it's possible. They run their own affairs where they go on trips together. So, it's quite a social situation involved there, too.

Dorfman: Sounds like a strong support system.

Fromm: Yes. Well, you know, we have a lot of retired teachers who have been retired now for twenty, twenty-five years. Either they weren't married, or if they were, the husband had died. If they had children, their children often live in some other place in the United States, in New Jersey, or God knows where. And quite a few times people have come up to my wife and said, "Mrs. Fromm, you saved my life." So she said, "What did I do for you?" They would say, "I was ready to commit suicide. I had absolutely nothing to live for. I'm all by myself and why should I go on?" Now you should see how they really have blossomed out, how those older people see life in an entirely different way. Of course, we have one problem that no one has yet solved: we have more women than men.

Dorfman: Why is that a problem?

Fromm: Well, we would like to have more men because since we have about one-third men, the ladies dress a little better. They put a little rouge on and they become women again which many really weren't for so many years.

Dorfman: It's interesting, isn't it?

Fromm: Yes, those are the little experiences, Mrs. Dorfman, that we have. You don't have to be a professor of psychology. You know, it's good common sense. That's what we try to employ.

And they go on trips. They have been in Ashland at the Shakespeare Festival. They go down to the aquarium in Monterey. They go to the senate in Sacramento. There is always something going on.

We have something that, I think, is unique--not done by any other institution. We have what we call the Brown Bag Luncheons. They are a series of lectures by outstanding professors from the University of California Medical School for about an hour. We pay them a hundred dollars for the lectures. These are people who get many times more for a lecture but most of them send their fee back and send an additional check with it.

The subjects of these lectures are particularly tailored to be of interest to older people. It was organized by a retired professor of medicine of the University of California Medical School, who is a student of the Institute. We have been doing this now for a few years.

Dorfman: Whose innovation was that?

Fromm: I think my wife had a lot to do with it because students would come to her and say, I have this ailment and that ailment. So, Hanna thought, maybe there is something that one can do. Those lectures are very well attended and there is no cost. People can eat their sandwich while the lectures go on. And the professors enjoy it, too. It has grown from Brown Bag Luncheons to a regular course.

Dorfman: That's marvelous.

Fromm: And then we had the same with legal courses. What is particularly important for older people? How to make a lease, or about insurance, or whatever is important for them to know: If you sell a house, or how to make a will, and all those kinds of things, because most of our students couldn't afford to go to an attorney. So, we give them this general information.

We have had very many other lecturers like Clifton Fadiman and Art Hoppe and many other outstanding people, people in the art and music world, like Kurt Herbert Adler, the former General Director of the San Francisco Opera. Since we have some students who are also docents from the Fine Arts Museum and the De Young, they arrange student body visits to the museums and give a really good explanation of the exhibits and the museum.

Fromm: There are a lot of activities. "From the Rooftop" is a weekly publication that tells the students everything that's going on at the Institute. It's mostly written by the students themselves. We are very anxious to create the feeling that this is a large family because that's what they don't have anymore, most of them.

Dorfman: It certainly has provided a network.

Fromm: Yes, and there are really many people who have come to my wife, particularly, and to me, too, who said this was one of the greatest things that happened in their later years.

Dorfman: That's understandable. Isn't it?

Fromm: Well, it has done them some good. It makes us feel good that we had something to do with it.

Dorfman: It must be a great source of satisfaction to you and Mrs. Fromm. You told me that the Fromm Institute has been a model for other institutes. Which institutes come to mind?

Fromm: All those institutes, all those universities and colleges which wrote to us and didn't know exactly how to go about it. We sent "The Fromm Institute for Lifelong Learning: A Guide and Model," (published at the University of San Francisco, San Francisco, California, 1982) to them. We get a lot of inquiries and people from all over the country and abroad, too, ask us for information.

Dorfman: What university has an institute that most closely--?

Fromm: Almost every large university today has some sort of adult education. But not in the same structured way as we have.

Now, for instance, we don't know absenteeism. Our students, almost dead or alive, they will come because it means so much to them. That was the reason, too, that we charge an annual fee of only a hundred and fifty dollars which is for twenty-four weeks of instruction. They can take four courses so you can take ninety-six classes for a hundred and fifty dollars. It's about one dollar and fifty cents per class. However, the amount it costs us, per student, is between nine-hundred and a thousand dollars. So that's what we have to make up per year. In 1987 we have to charge $200 to help our deficit.

We have an annual fundraising dinner or we ask some foundations and some friends to help, but the financial burden is to the largest extent on us.

Dorfman: Now, the Elder Hostels that we find on college campuses today, did they have their beginnings in the Fromm Institute?

Fromm: I don't think so. We get quite a few students from there. For instance, we make available ten scholarships free to the Jewish Home for the Aged. They arrange for the transportation and well, whatever has to be done--even though some of them come in on walkers. There are some, eighty or eighty-five years old, you know, absolutely amazing people. Their minds are as clear as can be, highly intelligent and a real inspiration.

The Future; Increased Education of Older Adults

Dorfman: It really proves the point. Doesn't it?

Fromm: Yes, that if you are old, or even if you have some physical disabilities that life has not ended.

Dorfman: And what do you predict, from all of your experience, for the future in adult education?

Fromm: There will be more and more, almost everywhere, because there are so many more older people. In 1984, we already had twenty-eight million people in America between sixty-five and eighty-five. By the year 2000, you'll have almost twice as many. Just look around, those people are here and something has to be done for them. This is gradually being recognized. The government, of course, often recognizes things late. Then they do a survey spending a tremendous amount of money to find out something we all knew already.

But it is a tremendous social problem that has to be addressed. The people in Washington understand that something has to be done. But nothing has been done under the present administration. There is hardly any money available for things of that sort.

We always felt that private enterprise had to carry the load. For instance, we never have asked nor have we ever accepted one penny of public funds. We could have gotten public funds from Washington or Sacramento, but we always felt it was a great mistake because if you get public funds, then politics comes into play. They tell you whom to take--such and such a professor should be taken--and all that kind of underhanded influence.

Dorfman: Is there one thing that has impressed you most about the Fromm Institute on the University of San Francisco campus?

Fromm: Well, that's hard to say. What impresses me is at those meetings, and I'm sometimes there, how happy the people are, and how many friendships have been formed, a very good racial and religious mix.

Fromm: We have a small percentage of Jewish people, naturally. But the largest percentage of our students is non-Jewish. And they all get along very well. It's really a group of contented people that has become much happier than they were and really look forward to getting additional education.

Of course, some of them are really challenged. The professors love it because they don't have to teach those often semi-literate undergraduates. The people who come to us are intelligent people and generally educated people.

Dorfman: What about the racial mix?

Fromm: Well, we have almost everybody. We have at present Chinese and Filipinos and people from all over. I don't think we have blacks right now even though they are most welcome. There is absolutely no barrier to anyone to join.

Dorfman: So it could change from day to day?

Fromm: Oh, yes.

Dorfman: What are the future plans for the institute at this point?

Fromm: The future plan is to maintain it if we are not here anymore. We are trying to make the necessary preparations in our wills so that the money, the cash is available to maintain the institute. We feel it is something of importance and will become more and more important. It is being realized that it is a national problem that something has to be done about, in fact it is worldwide.

The Koret Living Library

Dorfman: You lent me another book, Scenes From Our Lives which is a rich anthology. That's from materials in the Koret Library, published in 1983.

Fromm: The Koret Foundation gave us some years back, a grant of a hundred thousand dollars. Mr. Koret was still alive at that time and almost our neighbor in Seacliff. I said to him, this was something that was very important and would carry his name.

Then we had a small mention in the publication of the American Association of Retired People, AARP. It's a giant organization. It just said the Fromm Institute will accept unpublished manuscripts from people over fifty years. Now you wouldn't believe that in two months we got more than eleven thousand submissions including submissions from twenty-one foreign

Fromm: countries, some of them behind the Iron Curtain. A lot of it is material that is not of value for our purpose, particularly some poetry that some ladies thought was very important. But we have some real nuggets.

That anthology that I gave you, those were all stories written by our students. Those eleven thousand submissions had to be read and classified. This has been done now. Now we will publish another anthology before too long, if we have some extra money, because we really have some gold nuggets. There are some interesting writings from people between fifty and ninety years old.

Dorfman: That's wonderful. And all of those submissions are housed in the Koret Library?

Fromm: In the University of San Francisco, yes.

Dorfman: I'd like to ask you about the Koret Library again. What else does it contain in addition to the eleven thousand submissions?

Fromm: That's all there is, but the library has grown to about 14,000 manuscripts.

Dorfman: And how does this come to be housed on the--?

Fromm: Well, the Gleeson Library on the University of San Francisco campus is very large and we have some space there.

This material will become, ultimately, a valuable source of information for psychologists, social scientists and gerontologists because it gives you the thinking and the experiences of older people. What we wanted particularly are their life histories. In some ways it is a pity if this all gets lost. However, Mrs. Dorfman, I believe this might be more interesting to the grandchildren than it would be to the children of the authors because they often want to know their roots, where do they come from and all that. Now that we have it classified, it's available to the people who are interested in it. But this is all a fairly new thing in America. Ultimately, the Koret Living Library, which is part of the Fromm Institute, will become an important factor because it has hands-on information, you know. It's not a novel or anything, but these are actual people who write about their lives.

Dorfman: Yes, the details of day-to-day life not available on library shelves today. What else can you add about the Fromm Institute?

Fromm: Well, we would like to give additional classes. We don't want to see the institute become too large because one of the important factors of the institute is the personal contact with my wife and

with Professor Dennis, who is the program director and a well known scholar. So many older people are lonely and want to talk to someone. My wife is there at least three days a week. She's the Executive Director of the institute. People come up and talk to her and tell her about their children or their grandchildren or the wars or whatever happens in daily life. The fact that they can talk to someone who is listening is sometimes of great help. People often say to her, "You have done so much for me." And my wife always says, "Well, I haven't done anything for you." But it's important for people.

When we had our tenth anniversary in February of 1985, the student body organized a big luncheon at the Officers' Club in Fort Mason, a thank-you affair. We were given some pictures that some students had painted and other things. There were a lot of speeches and I spoke, too, and told them what our life experience was. When you do certain things, sometimes people think it all came very easy. We didn't inherit any money and we had no money to start, as everything was taken away from us. Later on, after the war was over, my father got some restitution, but it was only a small percentage of what he had. He had been a very wealthy man.

We do those things because we see the need for it and we were fortunate enough to be able to do it.

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IV THE FROMM INSTITUTE FOR LIFELONG LEARNING, MARTIN BUBER INSTITUTE, HEBREW UNIVERSITY, JERUSALEM, ISRAEL, 1985

Dorfman: What was the purpose of your recent trip with Mrs. Fromm?

Fromm: My wife and I went to Jerusalem for the dedication of the Fromm Institute for Life-long Learning at the Martin Buber Institute for Adult Education at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. It was shortly after the sixtieth anniversary of the Hebrew University. They gave a luncheon attended by about eighty or ninety people. Quite a few people spoke who had attended the institute (where classes had already begun). There were about three hundred and fifty students at that time, and they estimated a thousand students within a year or two.

The reason for that is that there are large numbers of older people in Israel and many of them want to work at developing a second career. This is being done. The lectures are in Hebrew and in English. There is a tremendous demand in Israel, even more so than in the United States because you have, percentage-wise, more older people in Israel than you have here--the parents of the younger refugees who came over.

In order to integrate them into the Israeli way of life, they are looking for something to do. There are jobs available. They do not pay much. For instance, in hospitals, in old age homes, in doing something in kindergartens, doing something for retarded children. There are a lot of things where older people, particularly women, can fit in very well and can do a very impressive job. With the economic situation in Israel very grim, if they can make fifty or a hundred dollars extra a month, it's of tremendous help to them.

Dorfman: How else does the purpose of the Fromm Institute in Israel differ from that of the Fromm Institute at the University of San Francisco?

350 pay tribute to Fromms at Scopus dinner

More than 350 people came to pay tribute to Hanna and Alfred Fromm and Hebrew University Chancellor Avraham Harman at the Annual Scopus Dinner of American Friends of the Hebrew University on May 31 at the Hilton Hotel.

The Fromms received the Torch of Learning Award for their support of the University, most notably for their establishment of the Fromm Institute for Lifelong Learning.

The Fromm Institute was modeled after a similar program the couple established at the University of San Francisco in 1975. The couple has been active in the Jewish community and in general philanthropy. Hanna Fromm chairs the Fromm Institute and Alfred Fromm chairs the new Jewish Community Museum. They also were the founders of the San Francisco Wine Museum.

Harman, former Israeli Ambassador to the United States, was presented with an honorary doctorate of public service from USF. The chancellor has been instrumental in establishing joint programs with USF as well as relations between Vatican Jesuit institutions in Rome and Hebrew University.

USF's president, Father John LoSchiavo, outlined is university's links with the Jerusalem school, including joint summer programs and the Fromm Institutes.

"USF is twice as old as Hebrew University," Harman said, "but we share one characteristic in common. I understand USF's first university in this area was rebuilt after the 1906 earthquake more powerful and stronger than before.

"In the same way, Hebrew University was hit by a different 'earthquake' (the 1948 War of Independence) and was deprived of its original building for many

Honoree Avraham Harman (left), Hanna Fromm, Tad Taube, Alfred Fromm and Caroline Fromm Lurie at the Scopus Dinner awards presentation.

"But both proved the university is not a physical facility; it is a community of scholars and students."

Harman, too, paid tribute to the Fromms and "the new bond of USF and Hebrew University" in the Fromm Institute.

Fromms give grant to Hebrew U. to open USF prototype school

The establishment of the Fromm Institute for Lifelong Learning at the Martin Buber School for Adult Education has been established at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, it was announced by Carl Pearlstein, president of the Northwestern State Region of the American Friends of Hebrew University.

This development was made possible through a grant from Alfred and Hanna Fromm of San Francisco.

The Fromm Institute for Lifelong Learning, under the directorship of Mrs. Fromm, has been in operation at the University of San Francisco for a number of years, enabling older and retired people to continue learning and self-improvement; to utilize leisure time in a constructive and creative way; to offer the opportunity to acquire skills and knowledge; and to further self-expression and fulfillment during the second half of life. All courses are taught by professors emeriti.

The Buber Institute focuses on stimulating independent thinking and judgement, assists in cultural absorption of newcomers and ethnic groups in Israel, works for good human relations between Jews and Arabs and encourages an ongoing dialogue between various groups, contributes to closing the social and cultural gap between Israelis and encourages and fosters lifelong learning in a changing society.

The Institute carries out these aims by means of extension work in various areas of adult and continuing education. It conducts summer courses and study groups for the general public, community leaders and professionals and organizes seminars for groups from abroad. It initiates research and pilot projects in adult education, runs an Arab-Jewish community center in Jerusalem and cooperates with various bodies interested and active in adult education.

The work of the Institute is supervised by an Academic Committee comprising representatives of the Hebrew University and the Ministry of Education and Culture.

The Fromm Institute will develop and extend the Martin Buber School by 1,000 additional students and an enriched curriculum. In recognition of the Fromms' commitment to the Hebrew University, they will be presented with the Torch of Learning Award at the Annual Scopus Dinner and Ball on Thursday, May 31.

California Jewish Bulletin. April 27, 1984

Fromm: The purpose is basically the same except that recently, they revised the age at which people can join the institute. At first, it was fifty years, the same as the Fromm Institute at the University of San Francisco. But now they have reduced it to age forty for the reasons that I just mentioned. That has worked out very well for them.

Dorfman: And when did planning for the institute in Israel begin?

Fromm: About 1983.

Dorfman: And it opened for students in 1985.

Fromm: Yes, yes.

Dorfman: And how did the idea come about?

Fromm: Well, when we were in Israel two years ago, my wife and I talked to a number of people and we could see there would be tremendous demand for the service we provide. And we talked to some of the people at the university and we talked to the president of the university, Don Pattinkin, and to Mr. Harmon, the chancellor and former president of the university. They strongly encouraged us and said the need was urgent. It's a great financial undertaking for us because they certainly don't have any money over there to run an institute of this kind.

There is a large sum of money involved for us, in funding this--which we have already done to a substantial extent. And we'll do the rest as quickly as we can.

Dorfman: Was there anyone else involved?

Fromm: The office of the Hebrew University in San Francisco. Mr. Roy Calder, the director here, was very instrumental in promoting this situation, talked to me and my wife a few times. Then when we came to Israel we saw how necessary it was to do something of that sort.

It was, for my wife and me, another important reason: we first founded and funded the Fromm Institute for Lifelong Learning at the University of San Francisco, a Jesuit university. We felt this was a small way of repayment to the United States which has done so much for us--to have the institution here. However, we always looked for a linkage. What should we do as American citizens and as Jews? And this was the right opportunity for us in Israel to fund this. And that has given us now that linkage between an American citizen and Jew.

Comparison to San Francisco Program

Dorfman: Does the structure of the institute in Israel differ from that of the structure of the institute in San Francisco?

Fromm: In some ways it does. Conditions are different over there. But basically the idea is the same: to find a place where older people can get the ways and means to again lead constructive and structured lives, too. If people don't do anything, they deteriorate very fast mentally and physically, particularly over there, because the climate is so extreme.

Israel is a very small country. The climate is very, very hot for a long time. So, people age quite fast there. And we could see that an institute would be of great help to many people.

Dorfman: In what ways specifically would you say that the structure is different?

Fromm: Well, an Israeli university is not exactly the same as a United States university. Basically, of course, it's all to give instruction to young people, in this case to older people. But our institute here has more social aspects than the one in Israel. In San Francisco at the university, we only have something like three hundred students who are taught exclusively by retired professors of very high standing. Our courses are on a very high academic level here. Now in Israel, the instruction is not given exclusively by emeriti professors, but by professors who are at the university who are not yet retired. That's probably the main difference. The courses given are in many ways for more practical purposes than the ones we do here.

Dorfman: Yes, that's what I read.

Fromm: Right.

Dorfman: Now you did speak to me about more mature adults relating at USF with younger students within the cafeteria and other meeting places. How does that take place in Israel?

Fromm: Well, it's the same. They can use all the facilities of the university as students of the Fromm Institute in Israel. We always thought that it was very important that older people interact with younger people because if you segregate older people then they really feel old. But the fact that they are surrounded by thousands of young students, it reminds them of their children or their grandchildren. Segregation is a very dangerous thing, particularly for old people.

Dorfman: How did the cost and the financing differ?

Fromm: Well, in Israel they charge a limited amount of money to attend courses at the institute. There are some scholarships. Whereas in San Francisco, we have more than twenty percent of our students on scholarships because we never turn anyone away for financial reasons. This is very important to many people.

Anyone who wishes to join the institute in San Francisco for the joy of learning is welcome. We have all kinds of people. We have a retired butcher. We have a retired window washer. We have retired professors from the University of California, the Medical School. We have businessmen. We have a lot of retired teachers. And all that because there was really no place where instruction on such a high academic level as we provide was available at a very affordable cost to older and retired people.

Dorfman: And what percentage of the students in Israel might be on financial scholarships?

Fromm: I don't know yet how much money will be available for scholarships. It will, I think, greatly depend on some help that we have to extend after the institute is completely funded.

Dorfman: What about the issues involved in developing the institutes. How did they differ from the issues in San Francisco?

Fromm: Well, some of them are more practical in Israel than the ones that we have here, as I mentioned before. So, many people in Israel joined the institute there at the Hebrew University because they wanted to learn some new skills.. This is less here in the United States.

Dorfman: What were the problems that had to be overcome?

Fromm: There really were no problems after we discussed this with various professors who run the Martin Buber Institute at the Hebrew University. We quite easily came to an understanding. The problem was the financing which we have solved, too.

Dorfman: In every successful enterprise as valuable as the Fromm Institute, there must be disappointments. What were the disappointments?

Fromm: Well, so far it is a young institute (in Israel). We really don't know of any yet.

Dorfman: In your opinion, what has been the most important change or innovation in college or university education since the Fromm Institute was opened in San Francisco?

Fromm: The recognition that older people have a place and that this is a great national asset that should not be wasted. Older people can contribute a great deal. We see it particularly here in San

Fromm: Francisco where our students and the young students--undergraduates, eighteen, nineteen, twenty, twenty-two years old--how they interact with our students in a beautiful way. Older people have some life experience and if they have some sort of intelligence that is a relationship that young people certainly need. And they can profit by it.

Now, for instance, at the University of San Francisco, here, our students can be guests at almost any course that the university gives as long as there is space without paying for it. Some of our students have achieved college degrees which they could not complete before because our students are of the Depression generation. And very many of them started college and never could finish because they had to go to work and make a living. We had at the institute some people that never received their high school diplomas because they had to go to work when they were thirteen or fourteen years old. We give them special instruction and make it posssible for them to get their high school diplomas. This was of enormous importance to them.

We had one case, a butcher who sent his five children through college. And he said to my wife, "Well, Mrs. Fromm, I really need to get some education myself so I can talk to my children."

V CULTURAL CONTRIBUTIONS

[Interview 3: July 23, 1985]

Judah Magnes Memorial Museum, Berkeley

Dorfman: In 1982, Elinor Mandelson interviewed you at the Wine Museum about your involvement with the Judah L. Magnes Museum. You spoke of discussing various problems that confronted Seymour Fromer, its director, and of assisting him. Could you tell me more about that particular time?

Fromm: Well, I've known Seymour Fromer for more than twenty-five years. He started the museum with nothing. He is an outstanding man in putting something together that very few people could.

I have helped Magnes Museum in various ways, not only through financial contributions. In the beginning, they had moved into their building in Berkeley near the campus where they are now and the mortgage fell due. They would have been foreclosed and would have lost the building. So I went to a friend of mine, Mr. Daniel Koshland, the well-known philanthropist, and I asked him to go over there with me, which he did. Then Mr. Koshland, myself and Leo Helzel, we put jointly up the money as a donation so that the mortgage could be paid off. Afterwards, I have every year made a contribution to the Magnes Museum up to today. I felt what Fromer did was really outstanding work and something that was important. The Magnes Museum, of course, is in a location that is not very easily accessible and not very many people come to Berkeley. But they have over the years, as it was at that time the only Jewish museum in the Bay Area, really done an outstanding job by collecting a lot of Jewish art. When we opened the Jewish Community Museum here in San Francisco, in our first exhibit, "Fifty Treasures," the Magnes Museum lent us some outstanding artifacts that we showed at the museum in San Francisco. There is a very friendly, cooperative, and respectful attitude that I have toward Mr. Fromer and toward the Magnes Museum.

Dorfman: It has been said that you left a stamp of your own on Magnes. What sort of problems did you assist with?

Fromm: Well, they are mostly financial problems, and I was a sounding board for the museum's director, Seymour Fromer.

San Francisco Jewish Community Museum

Founding

Dorfman: Let's go on now to the San Francisco Jewish Community Museum which opened its doors on October 10, 1984, with a memorable exhibit, "Fifty Treasures," of which you just spoke. The subtitle is "Judaica and Hebraica from Bay Area Collections." Why don't you begin by telling me how the idea for the museum began?

Fromm: Well, early in 1984, Brian Lurie, who is Executive Director of the Jewish Welfare Federation, Richard Goldman who was at that time the president of the Federation, and Frances Geballe, the daughter of Dan Koshland, called me for a meeting. Even though I was very busy, I agreed to help found a Jewish museum in San Francisco. I felt this was something that had to be done--something that did not exist in San Francisco. And we started to work.

I have to mention especially Mr. Bernard Osher. He is the head of Butterfield and Butterfield, a leading auction house, and a very knowledgeable and charitable man who is doing a great job for the museum. Our board has given substantial amounts, including myself. You cannot ask other people if you cannot tell them that everyone on the board has made a contribution according to his or her means.

Dorfman: The founding board really made double contributions in term of financial as well as their hours in their particular expertise. In what way, for example, did Mr. Osher make a contribution with his expertise?

Fromm: Mr. Osher is a very good and flexible businessman who knows how to handle problems. He and I, we made the two largest financial contributions. He knows a lot of people, and was very instrumental in raising the funds. I would say, between my own contributions, and those of people I know, I raised about twenty-five percent of the present endowments so far. Bernard Osher accounted for an additional substantial part. Of course, the Koshland family has made a very large contribution for the construction of the Jewish Federation building. In fact, at the

Alfred Fromm (seen left), vice president, and Daniel Koshland, (right), a benefactor, greet Professor Norman Bentwich (center) at the Judah L. Magnes Museum, ca. 1962.

Photograph by Alameda County Weekender

Fromm: entrance to the Federation building there is a plaque that recognizes that the Koshland family has made a large contribution and that the museum is in honor of Daniel Koshland.

I must have, in 1984, given probably between four and five hundred hours of working time to the museum and have continued to do so. I was retired already at that time, but I had many other things that I was doing. It was difficult because first there was the question of raising enough funds for an endowment. The interest income of an endowment would then help to defray the expenses of the museum. This was quite difficult, but we raised about a million, two-hundred thousand dollars. It is payable over a period of some years and we started a founders' group. The minimum contribution was ten thousand dollars that could be paid over three or five years in installments.

We had many meetings to get organized and there was the need of finding the proper director for the museum. We finally selected Helaine Fortgang, a very good people-person and a very nice person, too. We set up the various committees and decided that we did not want to buy much because good Judaica is very expensive. We decided that we would in the future try to get some first-rate exhibits on loan, which we did, like "The Jews of Germany" and now "The Jews of Kaifeng."

Many other presentations took place. For instance, we built a sukkah on top of the Federation building. It was a great success and created tremendous interest. A lot of people, Jewish and non-Jewish, visited it. Every year at the proper time we want to have the sukkah there because it is really a harvest festival. Sukkot, in my mind, is really the Jewish Thanksgiving to thank for the crops. So Thanksgiving was started by the Jews very many years before there ever was Thanksgiving in the Western world.

Dorfman: The founding board substantially aided in the financing of the museum. In what other ways did they help?

First Exhibit: "Fifty Treasures"

Fromm: Well, there was a question: what should our first exhibit be. Now, one of our trustees is Joseph Goldyne who is an artist and an art expert. And he took it upon himself to ferret out fifty outstanding art objects. It was amazing, you know: some of the things that some of the Jewish families had, immigrants who came from Germany, from Austria, from Czechoslovakia, from Poland--the Nazis let them take out those Judaica because they considered it junk. So we were able to show some really outstanding art works.

Jewish Community Museum

FOUNDING BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Alfred Fromm, *President*
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Phyllis Cook, *Consultant*

From Fifty Treasures

Preface

THE rush of business and the pursuit of the ephemeral should always be tempered by consideration of the timeless. Ideally, therefore, shouldn't a museum of sorts be harbored in every office building? The Jewish Community Federation Building has taken that step. We are delighted to welcome the Jewish Community Museum to its first home. We are blessed by its presence in our midst, for it infuses the building with a sense of the eternal as it provides us with an atmosphere of learning. It should be a constant reminder to us that Judaism is a rich heritage of lands and faces, customs and ceremonies, intellectual triumphs and staggering setbacks. A way of life programmed for survival by virtue of its compelling reason, beauty and compassion, it does not seek converts, but neither should it hesitate to reveal the splendor of its tradition. Over the coming years the Jewish Community Museum will have much to show and tell our Jewish and Gentile communities about that tradition—about our Jewish way of life.

Obviously, there would have been no museum without the belief, hard work and understanding of many individuals. At peril of offending some marvelous people who are too numerous to properly credit here, I must thank a precious few: the Koshland family, who gave birth to the museum to honor the memory of a unique and wonderful man, Daniel Koshland; his daughter, Cissie Geballe, who has been an inspiration to all; Alfred Fromm, a man of warmth and integrity and the Museum's first president; Bernard Osher who never says "no", may think "maybe", but always acts "yes"; Joseph Goldyne, for his creative ability and his unflagging energy as the curator of the exhibition celebrated in this, the Museum's first catalogue; Richard Goldman, William Lowenberg and Ron Kaufman, the Federation presidents whose stewardship saw the Museum to its successful opening; Helaine Fortgang, the Director of the Jewish Community Museum, whose ability, patience and kindness have been demonstrated to all those who have worked with her in this exciting enterprise. Finally, I would like to credit those members of the Museum's first board who were called to serve an institution that did not exist. Thanks to them, it does now. *Mazel Tov!*

RABBI BRIAN LURIE
Executive Director, Jewish Community Federation

Fromm: This was a great success, the first. We got a lot of publicity from it because the important thing in a Jewish museum is to show the Jewish the non-Jewish people, too, our culture and tradition. In this way, I think, it contributes substantially to better understanding. And a better understanding is something which is very important because very many people don't know anything about Jews.

A Jewish museum should make a contribution to the cultural life of the city for Jew and non-Jew alike.

Difficulties

Fromm: Well, there were the usual obstacles. If you have to create something entirely new, there's a tremendous amount of work to setting it up properly, to distribute the work load, to ask people who are very conversant with Jewish art works to help. This is something where I have very limited knowledge. We have some very good people on the board who are art experts. But Joseph Goldyne was the one who almost singlehandedly put this first exhibit together, and did a tremendous amount of work. He and his family, in addition, have made some very sizable contributions of very valuable art works to the museum.

Dorfman: According to the forward of the publication we just talked about, the goal of the founding board of trustees was to create a museum that presents exhibitions and creates programs which interpret Jewish values, beliefs, traditions and cultures. What are the specifics of implementing that goal?

Exhibit: "The Jews of Germany"

Fromm: Well, it's the various exhibits that we have shown, together with good catalogs. For instance, the largest exhibit that we've had so far was the "Jews of Germany" which was put together by a Dr. Roland Klemig, a gentile who was an officer in the German army, but was for five years a Russian prisoner. When he came back, he found out what had happened during the Holocaust and thought that was something that had to be aired in public. So he finally got the German government to finance this and he did this large catalog with the cooperation of the German government agencies, Jewish scholars in Israel and other countries. He was in Israel quite a few times to get information that he needed and with scholars from the United States and, in fact, the cooperation of scholars from all over the world.

SAN FRANCISCO
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

February 11, 1986

Mr. Alfred Fromm
655 Montgomery Street, Suite 1720
San Francisco, CA 94111

Dear Mr. Fromm:

The Arts and Culture Council of the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce is very pleased to inform you that you have been selected as the winner of the 1986 award for outstanding achievement in behalf of the arts as an individual business leader. Previous winners have included J. Gary Shansby, L. J. Tannenbaum, and Modesto Lanzone.

You were nominated by the Jewish Community Museum for your unfailing assistance in establishing the museum and for bringing the exhibition "Jews of Germany" to San Francisco. In addition, your steadfast support of the entire arts community was mentioned, including specifically your service on the boards of San Francisco Opera and the Conservatory of Music and the creation of the Fromm Institute for Lifelong Learning. The jurors joined the nomination with numerous examples of your continuing and inspirational support to the arts and the enhanced quality of life in the Bay Area.

The awards luncheon will be held on Thursday, March 13, 1986, at the San Francisco Hilton Hotel. Each winner is asked to attend personally to accept the award and to make a brief acceptance speech not to exceed one minute. We will also be honoring several businesses, three arts organizations and our special guest of honor, Miss Cynthia Gregory of American Ballet Theatre.

A reception for special guests will be held at 11:00 a.m. in the East Lounge at the hotel. You and your wife are invited to join us at that time. Members of the San Francisco press will also be invited. We ask that everyone be present by 11:45 as you will be seated at the head table. We will make arrangements for your wife and any other special guests to be seated in the luncheon audience.

If you are unable to attend, please designate a spokesperson to receive the award on your behalf. We would appreciate knowing the name of this person as soon as possible.

While we hope you will share this news with close colleagues and family, please note that the winners are confidential and will be announced for the first time publicly at the luncheon.

Again, please accept our congratulations. We look forward to having you with us on the 13th.

Sincerely,

Michaela Cassidy, Chair
Awards Committee

Nancy Meier, Manager
Arts and Culture Council

465 CALIFORNIA STREET, 9TH FLOOR
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94104, (415) 392-4511

Fromm: The exhibit is a history of the Jews going back to the Crusades up to the Holocaust, about a thousand years. Jews always were persecuted, murdered, and driven out of their homes. It shows, too, that anti-Semitism was not invented by Hitler. It has existed for a thousand years.

We invited quite a number of high schools to come in because we wanted the younger people who very often don't know anything about Jews, to see the exhibit. I think it had one good lesson that something like the Holocaust should not happen again, hopefully. It shows also the great contribution that the Jewish people made when they got full citizenship rights which was in 1869. The Jews in Germany made tremendous contributions in medicine, in law, in science, in music, in the arts, and in business. And the emergence of Germany as a world power between 1870 and 1933 was very much fostered by Jewish people.

In one way, I have always felt if people have a better understanding of each other, that this is also some contribution ultimately to peace.

Dorfman: I understand that the museum will have only a small permanent collection.

Fromm: So far we have. But ultimately we will have quite a number of bequests. Many of those art works that were shown in "Fifty Treasures" will hopefully end up with our museum as part of the permanent collection.

But you cannot accumulate a permanent collection overnight. It takes years to get this done. One day we hope also to have some extra funds so that we can acquire certain artifacts that are not available otherwise. The Stuart Moldaw family donated a beautiful bronze statue of "Hagar" that stands at the entrance to the museum. It is one of the important works of Jacob Epstein and of great value.

Dorfman: Yes, and you will have the space to house these materials?

Fromm: Yes.

"The Jews of Kaifeng, China"

Dorfman: Tell me about "The Jews of Kaifeng" exhibit.

Fromm: A most interesting story. It's really a Jewish tribe. They are Chinese. When you look at them, they look like any other Chinese. And they were there for a thousand years. There were two thousand

Fromm: of them when it was flourishing and then today, it is a small community. But they are Jewish, and they had a temple and we will have a picture exhibit of their synagogue that we are getting from the Museum of the Diaspora in Tel Aviv. We are in close touch with the Chinese community, with the Chinese Cultural Center because that's a joint undertaking. What it should do is to encourage the Jewish community and the Chinese community to know each other better and to enter into a joint project. Those are things that are very dear to my heart; I think I can do some good.

Dorfman: That's a wonderful goal because that's something that has never been done before.

Fromm: No, but I think it's necessary, and we will ultimately do it with other ethnic groups because the Jews are a minority and we need as many friends as we can get. I don't expect other people to do anything for us, but at least I don't want people to be against us. When you come from Germany, this is a philosophy which you can well understand.

Dorfman: Yes. What other ethnic groups do you hope to--?

Fromm: Well, we don't know yet. It has to have some Jewish connection because we are a Jewish museum. But, for now, we had "The Jews of Germany," now we are going to have "The Jews of China." And we are looking around to see what is available and then see if we can bring it over. We have some plans to have exhibits that have great local interest.

Dorfman: I would like to know more about the intergenerational docent program and how the candidates, both older and younger, are recruited.

Fromm: I would say they are mostly teenagers. But they take to it like a duck to water. [laughter] It's interesting for them and if work can interest young people, then they will do something.

This was something that Helaine Fortgang started very successfully where we have old and young people working together. Some of the foundations in California have given us some funds toward this effort because they feel that this is an important contribution.

Dorfman: How are the participants recruited?

Fromm: We have a number of docents, all are very well briefed. Before an exhibit opens they are always addressed--for instance, in the case of "Fifty Treasures" Dr. Goldyne explained to the docents what it all meant. In the exhibit, "The Jews of Germany," Dr. Klemig talked to them. I also did. Rabbi Joseph Asher gave a brilliant

Fromm: discourse. We give them a large amount of information so when they show people around, they really know what the exhibit represents.

Dorfman: How young are the docents in that program?

Fromm: They are mostly retired people with interest in the arts and lots of life experience.

Dorfman: Helaine Fortgang wrote in "Fifty Treasures", "Alfred Fromm has chaired our board with dignity and wisdom. His thoughtful response to a difficult question has frequently averted crisis and inspired solutions." What did she mean by that?

Fromm: It is natural that there are always problems coming up. I have tried to help Helaine, of whom I think very highly, to see what could be done. When difficult matters came up, as they always do, and where she didn't know just which way to go, we sat together to find the answer. A museum director--we are a new organization--always needs some help.

Dorfman: Is there anything in particular that comes to mind? A situation in which you helped Helaine Fortgang?

Fromm: There were personal questions very often, and of course, financial problems that came up continuously.

Dorfman: Then in another quotation from that publication, mention is made of preservation of the past as an inspiration for our future. Will oral histories will be included?

Fromm: We haven't planned on this yet. But we are young and it might develop. It's done over at Judah Magnes Museum and we don't want to be in competition with them.

Criteria in Accepting Gifts ##

Fromm: There's one situation which we have very strongly endorsed: that if we accept gifts or if we acquire something for any one of our exhibits, they have to be of the very highest quality. If they are not, it defeats the purpose of the museum.

Dorfman: And included in the quality would be the aesthetic, the historic and also the condition? Mention is made that some pieces were not included simply because of the condition.

Fromm: Yes, we rejected a number of art works that we felt would not be proper to exhibit because a Jewish museum is always looked upon

Fromm: critically by other people and we have to do a better job than just any new museum would otherwise do.

Dorfman: Were there pieces in particular that come to mind that might have been rejected because of condition that you would like very much to have had?

Fromm: Joseph Goldyne made the selection and whatever he felt was not of the first quality as far as condition is concerned or as far as historical value, he rejected. [break] --you can get twenty-five shabbas lamps. You can get many things of that sort that have no particular value. If you have one really good one, that's all you should have.

Dorfman: It is said that you always saw the complex side of design and growth of the museum. How did you participate in the design of the museum and the growth?

Fromm: The building for the Federation was opened a year earlier than the museum. The museum was built with experts from Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill. We had many meetings with them in order to get all the things the way they should be done. I would say that Joseph Goldyne was particularly helpful in this respect. A very helpful representative of Walter Shorenstein, the owner of Milton Meyer and Co., was available to us without cost.

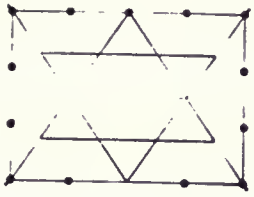
Sukkah Competition

Dorfman: Earlier you mentioned the competition for the design of the sukkah, which was judged by a jury. The winning entry, of course, was submitted by the distinguished architect, Stanley Saitowitz. Whose idea was the competition?

Fromm: I don't remember who mentioned it first, but it was discussed at great length in the board meetings. We had great help from Mark Goldstein who is one of the top partners of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, the architects. He was very helpful until recently when he retired from the board for health reasons. He supervised the construction and the physical layout of the museum, and also made a sizable financial contribution.

Dorfman: Of the museum itself. I wondered in what way you related with Mr. Goldstein about The Sukkah Competition.

Fromm: Well, we discussed it at great length and the prize was a trip to Israel for two which Mr. Saitowitz won. That worked out very well, and there was tremendous public interest shown.



ON WEDNESDAY, JULY 27, 1984, A COMPETITION FOR THE DESIGN OF A SUKKAH WAS JUDGED AT THE JEWISH COMMUNITY MUSEUM, SAN FRANCISCO. THE COMPETITION WAS SPONSORED BY THE MUSEUM AND BY THE ARCHITECTURAL FIRM OF SKIDMORE, OWINGS & MERRILL. THE DECISION OF THE JURY WAS BASED ON THEOLOGICAL, STRUCTURAL AND AESTHETIC CRITERIA, AND THE WINNING ENTRY WAS CONSTRUCTED ON THE ROOF OF THE NEW JEWISH COMMUNITY FEDERATION BUILDING WHICH HOUSES THE MUSEUM. THIS CATALOGUE DOCUMENTS THE COMPETITION AND THE ENTRIES OF THE PARTICIPANTS.

From Sukkah Competition

PARTICIPANTS

JOAN BROWN

SUSIE COLIVER

JEREMY KOTAS

TOBY LEVY

ANTHONY PANTALEONI

STANLEY SAITOWITZ

KEITH WILSON

*

SUSIE COLIVER AND TOBY LEVY WORKED TOGETHER ON A SINGLE ENTRY AND JEREMY KOTAS AND ANTHONY PANTALEONI SUBMITTED A JOINT PROPOSAL ON BEHALF OF THEIR FIRM, KOTAS/PANTALEONI, ARCHITECTS

* *

GARY APOTHEKER, ARTIST, PROVIDED TECHNICAL ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE WITH FABRICATION TO JOAN BROWN

STEVE BARONIAN, ANNE CHABLIS, LOUIS MOTA, SHARON ROGERS, ERIC SAIJO, JOSEPH PANTALEONI AND ARMANDO VASQUEZ PARTICIPATED IN THE DESIGN AND PRODUCTION OF THE KOTAS/PANTALEONI ENTRY

DANIEL LUIS AND FRANK WANG HELPED STANLEY SAITOWITZ WITH HIS ENTRY

STATEMENT BY STANLEY SAITOWITZ

The *IDEA* for the Sukkah is derived from an interpretation of the texts.

The *DESIGN* is a 'TREE' which branches into a 'STAR.'

'The people should dwell in booths for seven days so that your generations may know that I made the *children of Israel* to dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt.'

STAR, which identifies the childen of Israel.

'Take the fruit of goodly trees, branches of palm trees and boughs of thick trees and willows of the brook, and rejoice before the Lord.'

TREE, the tree of life etc.

'The *ROOF* is discussed first because conceptually it is the critical feature of the Sukkah':

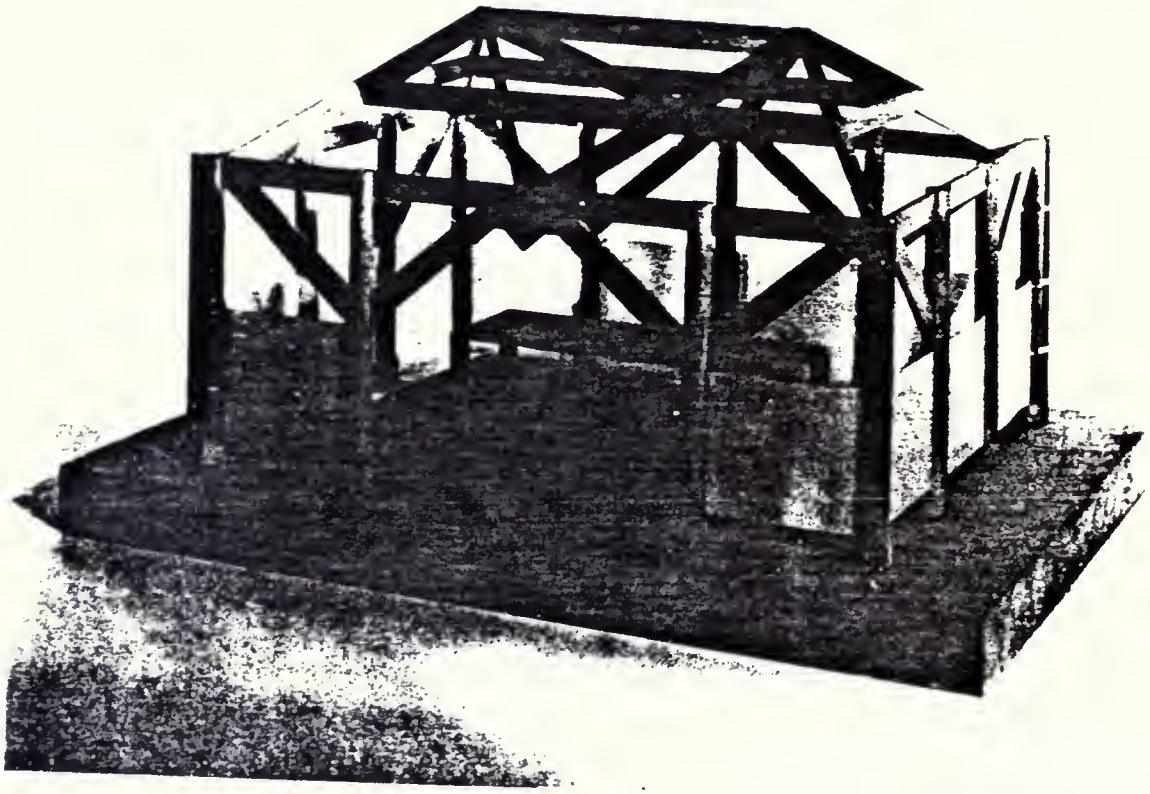
'One should be able to view the stars from within the Sukkah.'

'The entire roof must be made of organic material. Remember to let the stars shine through.'

The support structure for the branches is the STAR. The sechach (covering) is of palms marking the star, and eucalyptus.

The WALLS are in the image of branches, supporting canvas, making a tentlike translucent enclosure. (More canvas may be added.) Fruit will be hung in bunches from the 'branches.' The images at the top of the drawing are indicative: alternating eggplant and red onions, a floret of grapes, topped with radishes. Decoration would be a collective celebration.

The CONSTRUCTION will be 8" peeler core columns, bound with metal straps at the corners to the existing poles, standing on 8" concrete blocks. Timbers are 2x8's. All connections are with joist hangers and sheet metal brackets, screwed. Canvas walls are tied to columns. The sechach is supported by a rope mesh attached to the roof star.



MODEL BY STANLEY SAITOWITZ©, 11 ⅜ x 18½ 14 ⅜ in. (excluding base)

Fromm: Now, we've had other events since. We asked Jewish artists to submit their works and we exhibited them and they were for sale. We sold about thirty-thousand dollars worth of art works and returned over twenty-five thousand dollars to the artists. So, it was not only that we gave them a chance to show their works to many people, but it was a great financial success to the artists because, you know, artists have not an easy life. [chuckle]

Dorfman: Tell me, was that an unusual if not unique program?

Fromm: I don't know if other people have done that. But it showed tremendous interest and we will do it again this year for Pesach.

Dorfman: Was there any theme given to the artists?

Fromm: Well, we had a seder table that was made by some artists and was beautifully set. Many people had never seen that, particularly non-Jews. Many Jewish people never had any idea what it was all about. So, in some way, it is a teaching situation, you know. It's to pass on information to those Jewish people who were not very much involved with Jewish life.

Dorfman: As an educational tool as well as a cultural one, then.

Fromm: Yes, and I include myself in that.

Dorfman: What particularly do you remember about a sukkah from your past in Germany?

Fromm: I don't come from an Orthodox family. But we grew up in an Orthodox community and, of course, there were in Germany, where we lived, many people who had a sukkah. It was always a very festive celebration.

Dorfman: Were those sukkah symbolic as many are today, or were they more traditional?

Fromm: They were more traditional, but it was a family affair. In the small town where we lived almost everybody had a garden. So, the sukkah was in a garden, and the meals were held there. It was a very nice festival.

Dorfman: Your family did not have one.

Fromm: No.

Dorfman: So that the special meaning of sukkah to you--?

Fromm: Well, we knew, of course, about it. So, we visited the sukkah in some of our friends homes. There was great competition to have the best sukkah and they were beautifully decorated.

Dorfman: Is there anything else you would like to add about the museum?

Fromm: We will have some very interesting exhibitions. When I was in Israel, we talked to the Hebrew Museum in Jerusalem and we will contact the leading Jewish museums in the United States like the Jewish museum in New York, the Skirball Museum in Los Angeles and the Maurice Spertus Museum in Chicago and others. We'll find out what they have so that we can put an exhibit together from art works that are held by other Jewish museums and ultimately, of course, we would be very happy to loan out whatever we have.

Dorfman: Do you plan traveling exhibits, then?

Fromm: Ultimately, yes. For the time being, we don't have enough material yet.

Personal Interest In Art

Dorfman: This seems a good point to ask about your personal interest in art and how that developed.

Fromm: The arts were always a subject of great interest when we grew up. Later on, of course, we visited museums and art exhibits, and, in fact, collected a lot of art books. My wife and I, we must have at least a hundred and fifty outstanding art books from all over the world.

Dorfman: Is there a particular artist to whom you are especially drawn?

Fromm: There are some artists which I personally like very much and we acquired for our home some very good pictures of French impressionists and of German impressionists which we bought many years ago, or had inherited from my wife's parents. We didn't buy art as an investment. We bought it because we loved it and enjoyed it. Of course, today those art works are worth many, many times more than what we paid.

Dorfman: Whose work in particular do you favor?

Fromm: My wife's parents were art collectors and we have some of their pictures, like a beautiful Heckel. We bought a very good Nolde, a German impressionist, Liebermanns, and Floch. And we have some that we acquired from Hanna's parents, as well as a Schmidt Rotluff. Moll is not as well known in America. We also acquired quite a few French impressionists, like Vlaminck, Utrillo, Bonnard, Chagall, Dufy, Vuillard, and a beautiful Aubusson hanging from Lurcat.

Fromm: As I have collected wine antiques for many years that were shown in the Wine Museum of San Francisco, we have quite a number of interesting and valuable wine antiques in our home.

Dorfman: What do you look for when you look at a painting?

Fromm: My wife and I look at how it impresses us. I have, however, no understanding of real modern art. If you look at a painting or an artwork it has to give you something. For instance, if you go up to the Legion of Honor here and you look at the Rodins, they are absolutely beautiful. They tell you something and so do some of the pictures. I get a great sense of enjoyment out of looking at things. And as they say, I have some very decided opinions based on ignorance. [laughter]

Dorfman: Do you have anything else that you'd like to add to your feelings about your interest in art and collection?

Fromm: I look sometimes at art books when I'm very tired or when I have some problems. It gives me a lift. Our house only has so many walls and many art works are not affordable for us, and in recent years we have not added much to our collection.

Dorfman: So, your home then would contain, for the most part it seems, impressionists?

Fromm: Yes, French and German impressionists. We also have some very good clay, wood and bronze statues of Chinese and Japanese art. When we were in Japan many years ago we bought quite a few art works there that today are rare. At that time, one could still buy them. So, we have quite an assortment, but it is all distributed in our house wherever it fits best.

VI RELATIONSHIP TO ISRAEL

Reorganizing Israeli Wine Exports

Dorfman: Can we talk now about your relationship to Israel?

Fromm: I went to Israel in, the first time, in 1953. I was asked to reorganize the export of Israeli wines to the United States which was in very bad shape. They hardly did any business. Their wines were cloudy and bad. Well, they just didn't know how at that time.

So, I went over and was offered a substantial fee and my expenses. I said, "No, I will do it at my own expense. But I want to put in a fair report of what I find, and I don't want any politics involved in this." I called then on the Israeli Minister of Agriculture and told him that. I spent about four weeks there. At that time there was no air-conditioning, and it was miserably hot. It was in July, but this was the time when the grapes started to come in.

I went every day at six o'clock in the morning to the Richon le Zion winery. It was in a very run down shape and very much neglected. The first thing we had to do was to clean it up. I insisted on that.

It was started originally by Baron de Rothschild of Paris. The equipment was in horrible shape. Quite a few wines were not suitable to be sold at all. I tasted every barrel of wine and there were hundreds of them, it was a tremendous job. Then we made the blends and came out with Carmel wine, which was then introduced in the United States.

After I came back from Israel, I went to my friend Samuel Bronfman, the founder of Seagrams, and I said, "Sam, what do I do now? How do we get the orders?" So, he said to me,--it was on a Monday--"Come to my office on Thursday at four o'clock. I will

Fromm: have all the distributers in New York at my office." Of course, if Samuel Bronfman asked the distributers, they came. [laughter] We got tremendous orders and that's the way it started.

Later on, in the last one and a half years, I have been a consultant to some kibbutzim on the Golan Heights. They put out a good wine, Yarden, made from grapes grown on the Golan Heights, not in that hot climate you have in the valley. It's a quality wine that, however, is produced so far in very small quantities. It's only sold in the United States, except for one place. That's the King David Hotel in Jerusalem because so many Americans go there. The wine can compete with fine California wines.

Dorfman: Is it a white wine?

Fromm: A white wine, yes.

Dorfman: What kind of grape is it?

Fromm: It's sauvignon blanc. It's made from selected grapes and from grapes that are grown high up. So it's not so hot. You know, if you grow grapes in a very hot climate, they get very high in sugar, that means ultimately very high in alcohol. And you don't have the flavor any more. It's the same as if you take an apple that is grown in Fresno in the hot climate. It might be beautiful, big, and nice looking, but it tastes like a potato.

Dorfman: Ernest Nathan, who in 1954 was the Executive Director, Palestine Economic Corporation, credited you at that time with the rebirth of Israel's wine industry. In a letter dated 1956 from the then Israeli Consul to the United States, a Mr. Siven writes of the advice on wine that you gave to Israel.

Fromm: When I left Israel at that time, they gave me a beautiful Bible in a silver cover with some semi-precious stones, and they said this in the dedication, "To Alfred Fromm, a souvenir of his most valuable visit to Israel which may mark the beginning of a new era in the life and future of our wine cellars." But I don't take any particular credit for that, it was just honest work.

Dorfman: In 1970, Golda Meir invited you to a meeting with her minister of defense, foreign affairs and finances, and the chairman of the Jewish agency. What happened at that meeting?

Fromm: I couldn't go to that meeting.

My relationship with Israel is maybe on a somewhat different basis. I have a very simplistic attitude towards this. The first one is: if you don't help your fellow Jew, nobody else will. Secondly: by the grace of God, I am here and am able to help. Those are the two basic thoughts that I have. Then, of course, I

A taste of success

THE NOTED American wine taster poured from the unmarked bottle, inhaled the aroma, took a sip and let the wine roll around his tongue. Then he savoured the delicate after-taste.

"This is a fine California wine of the first quality," he told the Israeli winegrower. Then he went through the same procedure with the second unmarked bottle.

"Your wine is very good," he told the visitor, "but it just can't stand up against this premium vintage."

He was in for a surprise. When the wrappings were taken off the bottles, lo and behold, the taster found that it was the Israeli wine which he had found superior. It is a testimonial to his integrity and professional standing that he reported his findings in a respected American wine journal.

Israeli wines are not generally known for their excellence. When the average American wine-lover hears the words kosher wine, he thinks of something sweet and syrupy that sells well in poor black neighbourhoods. A premium wine from Israel not only has to prove its worth; it also has to overcome all the built-in prejudice in the wine industry.

Taking on this monumental task is Shimshon Welner, a dynamic kibbutznik from the Golan Heights, who admits that until a few years ago he had not the vaguest idea of how a fine wine tasted. Now he displays all the symptoms of a wine fanatic.

WELNER MIGHT have remained an average kibbutznik, happy to take a sip of sweet wine on a Friday night, had it not been for Dr. Cornelius Ough, who visited Israel in 1972 to advise local wineries on behalf of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). A professor at the University of California at Davis and an internationally renowned wine expert, Ough found that the best area for white wine was in the Golan.

One of the factors which led him to this conclusion is a rather complicated system by which the mean monthly temperature above 50° Fahrenheit between April 1 and October 31 is added up. The lower the resulting figure, the better the area is for white wine grapes. The Moselle area in Germany and Santa Barbara, California, both fall into the first regional classification with 2,500 degrees or less.

Among the areas in the second regional classification are the Napa Valley, also in California, while the Golan, with between 3,000° and 3,500° is in the third regional division. In Italy, Florence lies in the heart of a fourth division, while the Tel Aviv area belongs to the fifth group of regions.

According to the experts, the best white wines come from the first three groups of regions. But the Golan is even better than its third-grade classification indicates, largely because its daytime temperatures, even in midsummer, are not very high. Thus the mean is not the result of intense heat during the day and deep chills at night, but overall cool weather.

Following the visit, the Golan settlements convinced the World Zionist Organization to back them in setting up a few experimental vineyards. But the grapes were sold in bulk to local wineries, and the settlers had no indication of what kind of wine they were making. In 1982, they asked one of the smaller wineries to produce seven tons of sauvignon grapes separately.

"I KNOW NOW that they made the wine under terrible conditions," Welner says, but it was still the best white sauvignon in the country. Then I went to the U.S. with some wine to try to sell it. When I realized what I was up against, I threw it out."

But he did make contact with Alfred Fromm, scion of a family of vinters from the Franconia wine district of Germany. Fromm, who came to the U.S. in the 1930s, was for many years the exclusive representative of The Christian Brothers winery in the Napa Valley. He told Welner that if he wanted to sell wine in the U.S., he would have to acquire American know-how.

This was not as easy as it might sound. The local rabbis insisted that everyone working at the winery must be Jewish and there are not that many U.S. Jewish oenologists anxious to go off to the Golan Heights.

Finally they found Philip Steinschreiber, a good-natured Californian who freely admits that before coming to the Golan he wouldn't have thought of drinking kosher wine. And they kept sending sample bottles to Fromm, whose comments progressed from "good" to "very good" to "excellent."

AT LAST they were ready to bottle. They sent Fromm a list of almost 300 possible names, from which he chose "Yarden." He also approved the classically simple label, designed by Yaacov Shilo. Instead of the large kosher markings one usually sees on wine, Yarden has only a tiny symbol in the corner, indicating that it is certified as kosher by the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations, the largest U.S. kashrut supervision body.

Then Welner returned to the U.S. with his wine. Before going out with him, Fromm insisted that Welner dress the part. "They made me spend $350 on a suit and tie, shirt – even shoes and socks,' he says with a look of injured innocence. But wine sellers were still wary of any wine from Israel or any kosher wine.

Now, with ever-increasing clamps on government spending, it seems highly unlikely that the $35m. requested will be allocated, even if the expected annual turnover is $30m. If he can't get help from the government, Welner says, he will not hesitate to turn to private investors.

Meanwhile, the site stands on a hilltop with a magnificent view. Welner is already visualizing the busloads of tourists who will drive through the vineyard to taste the wine and eat lunch in the adjacent restaurant.

One prominent Jewish wine seller refused point-blank to taste Welner's product and had to be tricked by his son into tasting a glass, which he then pronounced worthy. Now, with a pilot production of only 250,000 bottles, the winery is hard pressed to fill its orders.

With an estimated retail price approaching $10 in the U.S., Welner sees little market for his product in Israel. The winery is, however, considering granting exclusive selling rights to Jerusalem's King David Hotel. Here Welner feels it will get the kind of exposure it needs with wealthy and sophisticated foreign tourists, who will, he hopes, look for the wine when they return home.

(continued next page)

HAIM SHAPIRO visits a new winery on the Golan Heights

IT WAS THUS that, on a crisp autumn morning, I found myself in the yard of a Golan packing house, tasting wine with Weiner, Steinschreiber and Yosef Kruvi, assistant general manager of the King David. Since neither Weiner nor Steinschreiber is observant, the wine was poured for us by a member of a religious Golan settlement.

In addition to the natural characteristics of the grapes, the white wines in particular benefit from a long, slow fermentation process that can last for up to 28 days. This is accomplished by keeping the wine at a low temperature through refrigeration while it is fermenting, and it results in a rich, fun bouquet. A special lightness, which makes the wine seem almost to dance on one's tongue, evidently comes from the volcanic soil in which the grapes are grown.

Stressing that the wines were not yet ready, Steinschreiber led us through a tasting session that was a real pleasure, with the aroma almost seeming to jump out at us. An emerald reisling from Yonatan had, he told us, the aroma of peaches, while a Semillon from the same kibbutz was "very grassy." A French Colombard from Gesher was reminiscent of "tropical fruit," while a Cabernet Sauvignon from that kibbutz had a hint of spinach with berries.

NOR COULD WE miss a visit to the vineyards, even though the vines have all but settled down for the winter. At El Rom, 1,100 metres above sea level, we could see Mt. Hermon in one direction and the rebuilt Syrian town of Kuneitra in the other.

Not too far away is one of the possible sites of what could be the new Golan winery – if the settlements get the backing they want from the government. Their fight for government help has not been easy. During his tenure, former agriculture minister Pessah Grupper, himself a winegrower, did all he could to squelch the project.

The Jerusalem Post Magazine

December 7, 1984

Tribute to Experts

Two great authorities who have gratuitously contributed the benefit of their invaluable advice to the local wine industry are Professor Harold Berg and Mr. Alfred Fromm. Professor Berg, of the University of California, spent some weeks in this country at the end of 1955 at the invitation of Carmel Oriental, studying the problem of the local industry. According to his report he was favourably impressed with the high standard of Israel wines, and indeed surprised to find them to be at least as good as the better California or French wines. Professor Berg advised the enterprise on how to overcome one of the great obstacles in the way of expanding its exports in the past, which was the fact that Israel wines were not sufficienlty stabilized and in some cases produced a sediment. Since then special equipment has been installed which is serving the purpose of increased stabilization. Professor Berg has left a number of recommendations, all of which have been followed up with a view to raising still further the standard of local products.

Mr. Alfred Fromm, who is a world renowned expert in wines, and who heads one of the largest wine concerns in the United States, is advising the Carmel Wine Company in New York on ways and means of increasing distribution.

It is felt that if a better rate of exchange could be obtained, the export of wine would expand rapidly, because this would enable the producers to offer local wines at competitive prices.

The Israel Export Journal

March, 1956

Fromm: have been in Israel at various times, and when you see what has been done there--I must say, when I came back from Israel, I became a proud Jew, much more than I was before. Nothing, I think, will further the cause of Israel more than to have people go over there and visit.

Dorfman: Why is that?

Fromm: Well, when they see what has been accomplished there when you compare it with the Arab countries, there is just a world of difference. The Israelis have made the desert bloom and had great success in the use of water which is very scarce over there. They invented a sprinkling system for vineyards and for other crops which is today used almost all over the world.

Israel can make a great contribution to arid African countries if they are ever asked.

We send money or a lot of food to the underdeveloped African countries. A lot of it is being misused. Corruption is prevalent and transportation is very difficult. But so many other problems--overpopulation--have to be attacked. The important thing is to create a set-up where people can feed themselves. And that the Israelis certainly have shown to the world.

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VII ORGANIZATIONS, ACTIVITIES, AND RELATIONSHIPS

[Interview 4: July 31, 1985] ##

National United Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society Council

Dorfman: On the 18th of April you received a letter from President Bob Israeloff of United HIAS, advising you of your membership in the National United HIAS Council. Please, tell me how you became involved in HIAS.

Fromm: Well, I became involved with HIAS many years ago because I could see the necessity. In those days there were not too many organizations that were ready to do something for refugees and immigrants. I have represented HIAS with the Jewish Welfare Federation for a number of years because I feel the work is very important. It goes back for at least twenty years.

Dorfman: And who drew you to HIAS?

Fromm: I don't remember, but, of course, I knew about HIAS and I thought it was something that one should give as much help as one could.

Dorfman: Why was that?

Fromm: Those uprooted people come to the United States and other countries, and there is nothing for them. They need jobs. They need sustenance. Generally, the people who are cared for by HIAS come without any means. So, I felt it was important that there be an organization that would extend some help.

Dorfman: How has your particular expertise been used by HIAS?

Fromm: I have no particular expertise in those things except that I am a refugee myself and I know how it is, although I came under different circumstance and a different background. But I was very anxious to talk to the committee of the San Francisco Jewish Welfare Federation who decides on contributions and explains what is sorely needed.

Dorfman: With whom did you relate in these matters at the Jewish Welfare Federation?

Fromm: Well, there was the Joint Distribution Committee. There were quite a number of people on it and they change every year.

Dorfman: How has the organization changed in the twenty years you've been involved?

Fromm: It has been very active in bringing in Jewish people from Soviet Russia. But this has trickled down tremendously and hopefully this will open up again. We had rather complete information of what has been done for refugees from all over the world. I studied the materials that they send us, and according to that we made our presentation to the Distribution Committee.

Dorfman: What is the relationship between United HIAS and the Council of Jewish Federations?

Fromm: I know that HIAS received substantial amounts from Jewish welfare federations, particularly in New York. They underwrite a good part of their budget. But then, of course, other Jewish federations in the United States are being asked to help too because that money was very badly needed. So, the Jewish Welfare Federation in San Francisco always has been very open handed with HIAS and has every year given them, very often not what they asked for, but they tried to come as close as they could. This was the main job of those of us who were on that committee. Ron Kaufman was on that and Annette Dobbs. We try to get the federation to be as generous as possible.

Dorfman: And where are the efforts being placed now that the flow of Russian immigrant Jews has diminished?

Fromm: Well, they are coming from all over the world. Now, of course, the Ethiopian Jews have come in and there is a yearly request from HIAS, New York, to the Welfare Federation that we represent here. We receive from New York substantial material that we use in our presentation.

Dorfman: Now as I understand, the goal of HIAS is to aid immigrant Jews who plan to immigrate to other places than Israel. What else can you tell me about your work with HIAS over the last twenty years?

Fromm: It's very little, except that I represented them together with some other people or sometimes alone, with the Jewish Welfare Federation here to see that they would get the help they needed. This was really my main activity.

Dorfman: As liaison?

Fromm: As liaison. Since I knew quite a few people on the Distribution Committee of the Jewish Welfare Federation and many knew me too, it was felt that I could be of help and I think I have been. But this is really all I did.

Jewish National Fund

Dorfman: Let's move on to your work with the Jewish National Fund.

Fromm: In the Jewish National Fund, I have been for many years a director, and for a few years a governor of the Northern California Jewish National Fund. I have been active particularly in their annual dinners, and quite a few times have been either the chairman of the dinner, or introduced the guest speakers, who were always outstanding people of national reknown. Of course, I financially helped as much as I possibly could.

Notable Speakers: Chief Justice Earl Warren, Senator Daniel Inouye, Senator Hubert Humphrey, Danny Kaye, Senator Frank Church

Dorfman: You gave the introduction at the 1965 Hanukkah Banquet at the Fairmont Hotel which honored the then Chief Justice Earl Warren, over twenty years ago. What do you remember about that dinner and Chief Justice Earl Warren?

Fromm: I was very honored that I could introduce him. I had great admiration for the man. The dinner was very well attended and Earl Warren spoke very well. He was really a great friend of the Jewish people and of Israel. That, of course, was the whole purpose of the dinner, besides raising a substantial amount of money. And I think we were successful in this.

Dorfman: And who was it initially who invited your membership to the Jewish National Fund?

Fromm: I think it was Charles Steiner, who was the Director of the Northwest Region of the Jewish National Fund.

Dorfman: At that time around 1965?

Fromm: Yes, and for quite some years afterwards. He always approached me whenever he had something to be done. And I was very friendly with Charles. He was a very good man. He's retired now.

Dorfman: You've been an integral part of so many of the Hanukkah banquets over the years. Can you tell me how you related with the very honored guests? For example, did you have an opportunity to meet with Chief Justice Earl Warren?

Fromm: Really not because there were so many people who knew him. I'm not an important member of the Jewish society here. The one person we became quite friendly with, my wife and I, was Senator Daniel Inouye from Hawaii, and also Tom McCall, governor of Oregon, for whom we gave a reception at the wine museum.

Dorfman: How did you relate with him?

Fromm: He was very outspoken and I thought, a very fair man. A good administrator. We discussed things that were of mutual interest. He was interested, too, in what I was doing in the wine business. So, we talked about this too. But I had no further contact afterwards with him. But while he was here and while he was at the dinner and while we gave the reception at the wine museum, it was all done on a very friendly and intimate basis.

Dorfman: That was 1974, the year he was honored by the Jewish National Fund.

Fromm: Yes, that would have been that year, yes.

Dorfman: Well, tell me how you related with Senator Daniel Inouye from Hawaii.

Fromm: We met him at the dinner and we talked a great deal during the dinner. I was very much interested in his story--being Japanese. If you were a German and became a U.S. senator, it would have been a very unusual thing, and I think it was in this case too. He was a very outstanding person who did a great job for Hawaii. He was, I felt very strongly, a good American, a man who really had the interest of the country at heart. He served in the U. S. Army and lost an arm.

Dorfman: Did you continue your relationship with the senator?

Fromm: Well, we wrote him from time to time, and if anything came up in which we thought he would be particularly interested, we sent it to him. He wrote us back but I haven't seen him for quite some years.

Dorfman: What, in particular, might you have written him about that would have been of interest to him?

Fromm: There was the Fromm Institute--that something had to be done for retired people. He was interested in things of that sort that were very important to me.

Dorfman: I see. And Senator Hubert H. Humphrey?

Fromm: Yes, we met him a few times, and after a few years when we met him again I was amazed that he knew me by my name, [laughter] and asked me about the wine business. Of course, this is one of the things that are very important for politicians, that they have a tremendous call back on names and on faces.

Dorfman: Was Danny Kaye on the program in 1977?

Fromm: Yes, I was chairman of that dinner. Afterwards Danny Kaye visited me a few times. We became quite friendly. He was greatly interested in wine and came up to my office. We talked for hours. After I had introduced him at the dinner he said, "Thank You, Mr. Kissinger." [laughter] And the reason was that Mr. Kissinger and I, we come almost from the same neighborhood and we both have that real German, Bavarian accent. [laughter] So, everybody laughed. Danny Kaye gave at that time an outstanding speech.

Dorfman: He seems to be much more than a comedian.

Fromm: Oh, yes, it was a very very serious speech.

Dorfman: What was the topic of his speech?

Fromm: Well, he talked about the many things that happen to people, bad things. Then in the end he said, this all has happened to the Jewish people and something has to be done about it. But he brought it out in a beautiful way in an outstanding address.

Dorfman: You must have worked in some way with other public figures. How about Milton Marks? He was on the program with you more than once.

Fromm: I knew Milton for many years and have helped him financially wherever I could when he'd run for election. He's a very nice fellow who represented San Francisco very well. He had the interest of the city at heart. We knew his wife too.

Dorfman: And a United States Senator, Frank Church?

Fromm: That's the one I wanted to talk about!

Well, Frank Church and his wife and my wife and I, became very friendly. They came to our house for dinner and we have seen him a few times. I thought he was a very outstanding man, a very sensible and reasonable man. When he was in San Francisco he generally called us and we met him for lunch or in some other way.

Dorfman: What was central to your conversations with Senator Church?

Fromm: Well, we talked about the general political situation, the foreign political situation. Of course, he was very well versed and very influential in it. We tried to give him our ideas, and he listened carefully, as they all do. If it ever has any value you really don't know, but at least you had a chance to discuss things with him on a very friendly and open basis.

Dorfman: What particular suggestions did you make to him?

Fromm: I know that we were very concerned about the development of nuclear weapons. We hoped that some way could be found to sit down with the Soviets, to see if one couldn't come to some arrangement that would take away that distrust that exists on the Soviet side against America and on the American side against the Soviets. I think this is what's wrong with our total relationship. If the Soviets and the Americans could sit down and say here this is what we need and we would know that their word is good, but nobody really is sure about it. It's a very difficult question because our present administration feels that the Soviets are cheating and that they want to mislead us. This could be--but I always felt that it is better when you can talk to people. And if you talk to people, you might find out really where the problems are. But I always felt the basic situation was that the Soviets did not trust us and we didn't trust them.

Dorfman: And Senator Church's attitude toward Israel and in support of Israel?

Fromm: It was very favorable. He had been there. And he understands very well the needs of Israel and the needs of the United States to have reliable allies in the Middle East. Because how far one can trust the Arabs nobody really knows.

Dorfman: Did your discussions with regard to Israel cover military aid and economic aid in terms of industry assistance?

Fromm: No, we didn't talk about military aid. I don't talk about things I know little about. We talked about the general situation over there and what could be done. I told him that in my own small way, I had tried to help by organizing their wine export. As I have often said, it's very easy to give money when you have it. But it's just as important and sometimes more important that you give something of your self, of your time and experience and create something that will go on. So, that was what I had particularly in mind as far as the wine export of Israeli wines was concerned.

Dorfman: Then your function and your duties as an officer of the Jewish National Fund?

Fromm: I had few organizing duties because I always have been very busy. I attended as many of the meetings as I could. There was always the question of raising money, which I certainly helped to do on my own, and then to organize the dinners. The Hanukkah dinner is the fundraising effort of the Jewish National Fund. I was amazed how many people were there that I never had met before. It's an entirely different group than the one you meet at some of the other Jewish organizations.

Dorfman: Why is that, do you think?

Fromm: I don't know. Well, there is something with the blue boxes, you know, that the children are instructed to use. There were many people whom I felt were of limited means, but they came and some of them gave surprising amounts. Sometimes people in lesser circumstances, if they give you two hundred or five hundred dollars, it might be more than five thousand dollars or ten thousand dollars from someone else. So, I was always very much impressed by the wide following they had throughout all parts of the Jewish community here and in the East Bay.

Dorfman: The major goal of the Jewish National Fund?

Fromm: Their major goal is to reclaim land in Israel so that the people who come over there can work on the land.

Dorfman: Do you have anything else that you want to add to your years with the Fund?

Fromm: I never have played an important role except that I have assisted where I could. Also, where they sometimes needed someone who was fairly well-known in the Jewish community, and had a good name. That's about all I could contribute, that and some financial help which I have religiously given every year.

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Dorfman: There is a photo of you with Baron Evelyne de Rothschild, in your home in 1973.

Fromm: Yes, he came to our house for dinner and we tried to be as hospitable to those people as we can, if they take the time and are glad to come.

Dorfman: Was that in conjunction with a meeting?

Fromm: It was in conjunction with an Israel Bond affair.

Dorfman: There is a photo of you with Baron de Rothschild at Madeleine Russell's home. The date was 1975.

Fromm: We met Baron de Rothschild. I introduced him at the Israel Bond Dinner. It was a fundraising dinner and he was the speaker. He's a very personable man.

Dorfman: What do you remember about him?

Fromm: He's a tall, good-looking man and very polished, like all the old aristocratic Jews. They know how to deal with people and people came and wanted to be introduced to him, particularly some old ladies. He had a very nice word for them and they were absolutely delighted.

Dorfman: Did he speak at the dinner?

Fromm: Yes, he was the main speaker.

Dorfman: Had you related previously with him?

Fromm: No, I hadn't and I had no contact with him afterwards.

American Technion Society

Dorfman: Let us go on to your work on the National Board of Directors for the American Technion Society. You've been with that organization at least since 1973, possibly before.

Fromm: Oh, yes, probably before. When we were in Israel a few years ago, we visited the campus. I was highly impressed with it, so was my wife. We saw the great need there is for educating technical people not only on account of the war situation in Israel, but in order to provide the manpower for the high-tech industries which Israel needs very badly and which is a great article of export for them. Hopefully, we'll develop it much further because that can solve some of their problems, which are very great.

That was really my involvement in this. Then over the years and after we came back from Israel, we have substantially increased our contributions because we could see the need of what had to be done.

Dorfman: Did you chair a committee for that?

Fromm: No, I don't think so. I have generally refrained from getting involved in those things because I just don't have the time. I help where I can and in matters where I can and where I have some contacts or connections and, of course, with sometimes substantial money donations. But in the daily operations of these organizations I had very little hand in it.

Dorfman: In 1979, you attended the installation of Bill Shapiro.

Fromm: Yes, I introduced him. He is the son-in-law of Madeleine Russell. We knew Madeleine Russell for many years and we have known Alice, Bill's wife and the children for many years too. So, I was very pleased to do that. When Bill was installed as president of the San Francisco chapter, we started to take a larger financial interest in Technion than we had before.

Dorfman: While your involvement has been on the national board?

Fromm: Yes.

The Alfred and Hanna Fromm Scholarship Fund; Brandeis University, 1975

Dorfman: And then in 1975, the Alfred and Hanna Fromm Scholarship Fund at Brandeis University was started. Tell me about that.

Fromm: Well, we were asked to be the honorees, which we at first refused. But then Madeleine Russell and Ben Swig talked to us at various times and we couldn't refuse anymore because we had known both of them very well for many years. There was a dinner, a fund was established to which we contributed each year.

But all these activities, Mrs. Dorfman, really were of very little importance and of very little interest, I think, to anyone but us. I have done what I can, in the way I could do it. But I haven't given it more time because I always have been a busy person running our busines, and quite a few other things in which I'm directly involved. So, I wasn't able to do a lot. I tell you these things because you ask, but to me they are of no particular significance. It's something I do because it's the right thing to do.

Dorfman: Historians are interested in what, how, and why busy people volunteer and donate.

Alfred and Hanna Fromm Professorship, Hastings College of Law, University of California, San Francisco

Dorfman: How did the Alfred and Hanna Fromm Professorship at Hastings College of Law come about?

Fromm: It was established by my nephew, Peter Maier, who is a professor of tax law at Hastings. He is a tax attorney and is also a professor at Boalt Hall in Berkeley. My wife and I have also made contributions. This professorship was established about 1978.

Dorfman: Earlier, you mentioned your relationship with Ben Swig. You must have known him for some years.

Fromm: Yes, I knew him for many years. I had the highest regard for him. Ben was a marvelous money raiser. Whenever he asked me, I complied with whatever I could because I had such respect for him. He was himself a very great giver and I always felt that if a man like that does something, then I who was not in the same financial position--that I should do my share. So, we were very friendly and he called on me very often. I was always glad to help.

Dorfman: Fundraising, of course, is a very special skill.

Fromm: Yes, well, Ben certainly had it.

Dorfman: What was it about him that permitted him to raise funds with such success?

Fromm: It was the way he explained things and the example that he set himself. It wasn't just someone who asked you to do something, but he did it himself and did it in a very big way. I had great admiration for that.

Dorfman: You also worked for a number of years with Cyril Magnin. What kind of a man would you say he is?

Fromm: Well, he is a very capable man. I think he has a great ego and this is what makes him so effective in many ways. We knew his daughter, Ellen, and his son-in-law, Walter Newman, quite well for many years. We've had social contact with the Magnin family for a long time.

Dorfman: You worked for the National Jewish Hospital and Research Center in Denver as the greetings book chairman in 1981.

Fromm: I have known the people from this Denver hospital for many years. It is an ecumenical interfaith institution. I always have helped them and we have given them rather substantial amounts every year because I think they are doing a very outstanding and needed job.

Dorfman: You've had contact with the present mayor of San Francisco, Dianne Feinstein, over the years. What impact have those contacts had?

Fromm: We have known Dianne Feinstein since she was a little girl. We knew her father quite well. In fact, he was Professor Goldman, chief of surgery at the University of California Medical School.

Fromm: He was a teacher of our son who is now professor and chief of surgery at the medical campus of New York State University in Syracuse, New York. We've known the Goldman-Feinstein family for many years. We are on a personal and very friendly basis.

Dorfman: What can you tell me about her?

Fromm: I believe she's an immensely capable and ambitious person--a tremendous workhorse, which in this job is necessary. She has a very good political instinct. I was very happy that she recently didn't run on the Democratic ticket for vice-president because I felt that the Democrats had really no chance.

And what she will do after her second term as mayor, I don't know. We know each other very well socially, but politically we have very little contact. Although, I have helped Dianne when there was a need to do some financing or put up some money for her campaign. But it's really more a personal friendship.

Dorfman: How effective a mayor do you feel she has been?

Fromm: I think she has been quite effective, has done a lot for the city. You know, it's very easy to criticize, but with our whole system of supervisors and commissions, it's not very easy to do it. I think she has done, under the circumstances, a very credible job.

VIII THE BANK OF AMERICA; AN EARLY AND CONTINUING RELATIONSHIP

Dorfman: What is your relationship with Walter Hoadley of Bank of America?

Fromm: Walter Hoadley is a great personal friend of mine.

Dorfman: In what way did you relate with Mr. Hoadley?

Fromm: Socially, and I have done business with the Bank of America since I've been in this country. They were the only ones who helped us when we started our business! We had nothing but a good name and a knowledge of the business. But very little money. The Bank of America at that time came forward and made it possible for us to expand our business. So, over the years I have known almost every one of the top people in the Bank of America. I have personal friendships with most of the presidents of the Bank, the latest was A. W. [Tom] Clausen, and Sam [Samuel] Armacost and the top people before them.

I have done all of my personal business with the Bank of America and our firm has also done a lot of business with the Bank. We are for them a good and a very safe account. And they like to talk to me sometimes to get the feelings and opinions of someone who is not in the billion dollar class, but with a good medium sized business. Particularly they want our opinion about the wine industry, about grape growing, because I could give them some firsthand information.

Dorfman: Based on some solid experience.

Fromm: Yes, because this is the business I know something about. I met Walter Hoadley there, too. He was the chief economist of the bank. He's a good personal friend of mine, he has been at our home quite often. We have been at his home or at parties with him. He's a particularly open-minded, nice man, and I think, a great friend of the Jews too.

Dorfman: And you met him at the bank?

Fromm: Yes.

Dorfman: With whom did you relate at the Bank of America when they were so responsive to your expansion?

Fromm: Originally, it was Fred Ferroggiaro. He was chairman of the finance committee and was the executive vice president. He was an old style banker who was not a "collateral only" man when considering a loan. This is different today because those days, I'm talking about 1936, 1937, the bank was by far not as big as it is today.

We became very friendly and I met Fred Ferroggiaro many times over at St. Mary's College. He was a regent of St. Mary's College and so was I. We had great mutual respect and liking for each other and whenever I needed something, if I went to him, the bank really cooperated with us. Of course, we paid every loan very promptly too. [laughter]

Dorfman: Well, that goes a long way.

Fromm: Then later our firm grew substantially. We had rather substantial credits in the bank, but they were short term credits because we needed money in the fall when all the grapes come in at one time. Then the federal tax on brandy had to be paid during the big shipping season in the fall. So there were very large amounts of money required. We borrowed this from the Bank of America, but generally, after three or four months it was all paid off.

Dorfman: To whom was that tax paid? Which government agency?

Fromm: The Internal Revenue for liquor tax.

Dorfman: Not the State Franchise Tax Board?

Fromm: No, that was paid by the wholesaler. The federal tax had to be paid before you could take the brandy out of bond. When I acquired the majority of the firm of Picker-Linz Importers, Inc., in New York, I needed a few hundred thousand dollars in 1945, to buy out the other partners. I went to Mr. Ferroggiaro and he arranged a credit for three or five years at a very low rate of interest. And I argued with him continuously about the interest rate, and he said to me, "Well, Alfred, I will give it to you because anyone who argues with me so much about the rate of interest rate is going to pay." [laughter] That's good old-style banking! People who don't pay don't care what the interest rate is.

Dorfman: Yes. I wonder if the Bank of America could operate that way today.

Fromm: No, today it's a giant bank with lots of problems. It's not the same as it was back when I got my first credit at Bank of America. Mr. Gianinni was still alive and I met him. He was an amazing man. When I came to the bank to call on Mr. Ferroggiaro it was always at eight o'clock in the morning. That was a period when he had time. And the second time I came there, it was maybe two, three months later, I saw Mr. Gianinni. I said hello to him and he said to me, "Well, Alfred, how are you and how is the wine business?" The man had tremendous recall, too. You know those public figures need to have this gift. Why would he know my name? I was at that time a small businessman.

Dorfman: Apparently not to the Bank of America.

Fromm: Not at that time. We were not big customers. But we always had a nice relationship. I think I told you that to me the most important thing in any business relationship and in personal relationships too, the first thing is that people respect you and know that your word is good. If they like you that's very nice, but if they only like you and don't respect you, you have nothing.

IX WINE MARKETING CENTER, UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Dorfman: This leads us to the work that you did in wine marketing at the University of San Francisco.

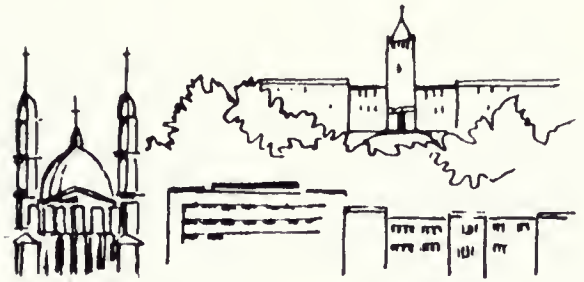
Fromm: Well, the really top quality wines in California are generally produced by very small wineries which we call boutique wineries. They produce and sell small quantities, very often just a few thousand cases a year. And with the tremendous increase in competition, many of these wineries are in a difficult financial situation because they don't have the ways and means to market their product. And regardless of how good a product is, if you cannot sell it, it doesn't do you any good.

So, with the large firms in our industry, like Gallo, and the spirits firms like Seagram and Heublein, National Distillers, and Schenley, the wine business has taken an entirely different turn. Those giant producers make a very acceptable wine, better than the daily wines in Europe. It's absolutely a fact. But the small wineries are gradually being pushed out of business because the large wineries spend fifteen, twenty, twenty-five million dollars and more a year and more on television, which, of course, a small winery cannot afford. They have no marketing person.

A friend of mine, Dr. Su Hua Newton who, together with her husband, owned Sterling Vineyards before it was sold, talked to me. Now they own Newton Vineyards, a small premium winery in Napa Valley. She came to me one day and asked, "Well, can we do anything about this?"

Planning with Dr. Su Hua Newton

Fromm: So, we put our heads together. She's a very inventive woman, very capable, and with a lot of good ideas, but she hardly knew anyone in the industry. So, we devised a plan which I said was the only way it could be done: to invite the president of the University



University of San Francisco

WINE
MARKETING
CENTER

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Dr. Su Hua Newton has been Associate Professor of Management at USF since 1981. She has also been a professor of Psychology at London University and at Victoria University, New Zealand. Prior to teaching she was with the British Broadcasting Company and with McKinsey and Company.

Dr. Newton earned her undergraduate degrees in New Zealand and her doctorate in London. She also has a BFA from Mills College, California.

Dr. Newton was treasurer of Sterling Vineyards for five years before her current association with Newton Vineyard. She is also a director of Sterling International, an international paper company.

Dr. Newton serves as Director of the Wine Marketing Program.

Fromm: of San Francisco and the leading heads of the premium wineries in California to come to my office for lunch. We told them that we want to educate young people who are at the University of San Francisco or in other places to learn about wine marketing and also product knowledge. They are wine makers, but if you are a good wine maker and you don't sell your product, what good is it?

So, we got the owners of the best premium wineries and of the largest wineries to be our lecturers and we told them right from the beginning that we wouldn't pay them anything. But they were very glad to do this and this has developed into a very good organization that is known throughout the United States in wine circles. We have quite a few people from very prestigious wineries that send their people to get this additional education because it's very necessary.

When I first came to California in 1934, 1935, there were probably twenty-five or thirty wineries here. Today you have over six hundred. So, the competition is fierce. And I always felt that it was very important that the small top premium wine be maintained because this is where the reputation is being built. The same as the French reputation came from Chateau Lafitte, Mouton Rothschild and all the other top first growth wines of France. They built a reputation and then the mass wines came in. For instance, the Italians have not been able to do that, but they hardly have any wines of that outstanding character.

The French get enormously high prices for their top wines. Five hundred, six hundred dollars a case and more for young wines. When the wines are a few years old, they sometimes sell for a few thousand dollars for a case of twelve bottles. It's overdone but there is so little of it and it is sent all over the world. So, they can get that price. The wine is certainly not worth that kind of money. There is no wine that is worth that kind of money, but it is a rarity.

The Wine Marketing Center now has an accredited course of study at the University of San Francisco, which has cooperated very well with us. We have personally, Dr. Newton and I, given most of the money that it took to start this. It always is, you know, hard to get money from other people. But we both have put real money into this, and felt that it was an important contribution that we could make to an industry that has been very good to us. Now the large firms see it too, and they understand the existence of the small boutique wineries is just as important to them too. If everything is mass produced, then we are losing an advantage that we have in California where we really can produce wines of world class.

Dorfman: That began on what date?

Fromm: We started this about two and a half years ago, 1982. I have given considerable time to it, and I have been very actively involved by calling on the people whom we wanted to speak, and we got almost everyone that we wanted. I told them, "Look, the industry has been good to us. So, give something back." And on that basis, I don't think I ever had a refusal.

Dorfman: It's a very tightly knit community, isn't it?

Fromm: Yes, but you have to know the people. And Dr. Newton hardly knew anyone and most people, even if they didn't know me personally, they knew who I was. I had been the head of Fromm and Sichel for so many years. We were the world-wide distributors of the Christian Brothers, a very successful firm. So, it wasn't difficult to make these contacts.

Then, the next thing was to get the people for the wine product knowledge classes. We have good contacts at the University of California at Davis which is the leading viticultural school in the world today. We got some of their professors to give courses on wine production. We got people from large wineries, small wineries. Their wine makers came and gave courses. We had a host of outstanding speakers and we didn't pay anything for it. But we needed this help.

Our classes are completely filled. And whenever our students graduate, many of them go back to the wineries where they worked before. Now they have this additional knowledge: how to sell wine. Others like Safeway, Liquor Barn, which are very large outfits, each time take six or eight of our students that have graduated because they want someone who knows something about wine.

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Dorfman: How does the marketing of wine differ from the marketing of other beverages and food products?

Fromm: Well, other beverages and food products have simple marketing goals. For example, with Coca-Cola there is not very much that you have to know about the product. But wine has such a diversity. There are hundreds of imported wines. And it's important that we spread the good word of the quality of the top California wines which are really world class. To see to it that the retailer, who very often is not educated about wine, particularly the smaller retailer of imported wine--it is also important that the people who have come from our wine marketing course can impart some knowledge to those retailers, and therefore build a relationship of confidence with the consumer. You know, if you just sell a retailer something and he doesn't know what to do with it, you haven't accomplished anything.

Fromm: The old idea--that if you were a crack salesman you could sell an icebox to the Eskimos--is outmoded. This is not being done this way anymore. First, it's important to establish the human relationship between seller and buyer.

When you have that, you get him interested and then explain the product to him and show him that he can have a wine department instead of wine being displayed among all the liquor and decorate it nicely and display the wines in cases. So, we showed this to the students. The promotion department of the large firms give us all their knowledge, because they too have an interest in keeping those small wineries in existence. The smaller wineries are not taking anything away from them. The large wineries sell through television. They are giant organizations. It's an entirely different business.

Dorfman: What positions do the graduates of your program go on to take?

Fromm: Some in large liquor stores who want people who have knowledge and can advise the consumer. Then there are quite a few who were in wine production, engaged in small wineries, but had absolutely no knowledge about marketing. And this was the most important goal we had: to get these people to understand that wine has to be sold. They couldn't afford to have any extra marketing person. They were too small for that.

Dorfman: So that there is this bridge of information between production and marketing?

Fromm: Yes. You see, many of the production people have no idea about marketing and don't think much about it. They think if the wine is good it will sell. Well, often it doesn't. Secondly, the marketing people very often have no appreciation of the pitfalls and the difficulties in producing a fine product. So, it's important that those two sectors get together, and that's what we're trying to do.

Dorfman: So, some of the graduates of your program, those not directly selling to the retailer, would be involved in a peripheral way?

Fromm: Quite a number of small quality wineries have many visitors. And they should know how to treat them without overwhelming them. How to do it in the proper way so that the customer doesn't feel pressured. And some of those winemakers now go out and call together with their salesmen, when they have the time. So, they take on that additional function of being helpful in the marketing end of the business.

Dorfman: How many graduates of the program are selling full time to the retailers?

Fromm: They are not only selling to the retailers. Some of them are now employed by some of the large firms in their advertising department. You know, if you want to advertise a wine you are supposed to know something about it. It's to me an un-American attitude to disregard product knowledge.

Program Changes

Dorfman: The program is so new--how has it changed since it began?

Fromm: Yes. We learned certain things that were more important than others. We got additional people to give the lectures, people from different parts of the industry, and some wine writers. But the program has been very well accepted. If the university could give us more classrooms, and if we had more money, we could have five times as many students. There is such a demand for the program from all over the country.

There are some marketing programs at the University of California at Davis and at other places, in Fresno State University, for example, but they're not really thorough programs. They are somewhat superficial, whereas we go into the details and specifics and say, "This is the way you set up a display. This the way where it should be seen. Let's say you have a few boxes of wine next to a refrigerator case." They're all those things that one has learned over many years. The people who send us those students, they generally don't advertise. So, it has to be sold in an entirely different way. They learn how to make up a nice sales brochure. Most of those people don't know when they received a gold medal, how to hang a replica on the bottle. There are hundreds of techniques being taught by people who have had great experience, who have been in this industry for many years, and have found what has been successful.

Dorfman: So, the course includes theory, but certainly goes beyond--?

Fromm: Oh, yes. Mostly the practical things because that's what the people need. Of course, the one thing in selling which we always tell our students is, you have to work very hard, and you have to be willing very often to take some bad days with the good days, and you need a certain aggressiveness--to want to succeed. Your psychological attitude is very important in selling. It's not only knowledge. You can have a professor with the greatest knowledge in something, who can be the greatest dud when you talk to him because he cannot relate.

The Future

Dorfman: What are the future plans?

Fromm: Well, we want to continue this. And what I would like is for the Wine Marketing Center to ultimately become the marketing center for most of the agricultural products of California. We have almonds; we have all sorts of fruits; we have everything in California. We try to show the agricultural community that they need better educated people, that marketing is very important.

Dorfman: And how to tap into the experience of those who have been successful?

Fromm: Yes. We are not that far yet, but that's ultimately what I would like to see.

Dorfman: Are there plans for that in the future?

Fromm: Yes. We are talking about it, but it's a matter of money, too. Agriculture doesn't pay much and it's very difficult to get any money from those people. But there are large producers. When you look at pistachio nuts, many people never have heard of them. Well, we produce them now here in California. Look at kiwi fruit. They are being produced now here. Many things of that sort that are small items, in the total picture, but very important items to the people who produce them, and can be very profitable. They don't have an organization. They don't have anyone. Really, they might have an agent who sells it, or so. But the agent has fifty other things.

Dorfman: So, a marketing program then would help to make a more cohesive community among them as well.

Fromm: Yes, that's what we would ultimately like to see. I hope I would be around long enough to see it.

Dorfman: Do you have a projected date?

Fromm: No, this has to develop. You know, in my long business life, I often have seen that if you make definite plans that something has to be done by a certain date, very often, it doesn't work. It has to develop in a natural way.

Dorfman: Are there other parallel programs?

Fromm: Not in the same way, no. Ours is the most complete program of wine marketing and to my knowledge, product knowledge.

Dorfman: Did you and Dr. Newton pattern the program after another program?

Fromm: No, we worked it out ourselves.

Dorfman: What else would you like to add?

Fromm: Well, there's not much else. I gave it considerable time and still do, and have a real involvement. But I hope this will develop the way we want. I always felt the industry was very good to me. I worked hard for it, naturally, but we were fortunate. So, I would like to give something back, and see that the industry develops in a normal and proper way, instead of just ending up as a few giant firms who will produce millions and millions of cases of an average, good drinkable wine, but not of real qualilty wine. This has to be maintained and it is something that people in America often don't understand. The wine industry, of course, is a new business with fourteen years of prohibition. There was no wine business when we came over. A number of us began to create it.

X MORE ABOUT ACTIVITIES AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Dorfman: I saw a photograph of you in an ad for Barron's, the publication. It was October of 1977 in Dun's Review. Why don't you tell me about that?

Fromm: Well, Barron's contacted me and asked me if I would be willing to be in an ad. I said, "I will be if you feature our product. And it will cost you a contribution of a few hundred dollars to the Fromm Institute For Lifelong Learning. I will not personally accept any money from you." And they did. [laughter] It was in Barron's and in quite a few other magazines.

Dorfman: Yes, it was a very well done ad. How much time did that take to photograph?

Fromm: It took a day or so.

Dorfman: That's very interesting.

Fromm: But those are all very little things, Mrs. Dorfman. I would never have considered this as anything that would interest anyone.

Dorfman: You are a member of the advisory board of the California State University at San Francisco.

Fromm: Yes, we knew the various presidents of the state university very well. And my late brother, Norman, had particularly good connections to the art department, music and other art forms. And we have continued on that. The last president was Dr. Paul Romberg. He just died a few months ago. He was a very close personal friend of ours and he was one of the founding directors of the Fromm Institute, too. We asked him to help us to recruit the proper professors for us, which he did. And his predecessors, the first two or three before him, we all knew quite well. Glenn Dumke, who was the chancellor of the whole university system, is a personal friend of ours.

Dorfman: And what contribution have you made in an advisory capacity?

Fromm: Well, there were a number of problems which came up at that university, particularly housing, for others, money, of course. And they are discussed at great lengths by this advisory board, and we gave our opinions and tried to come to a solution. I personally have recruited a few members to join. I have given some financial assistance. We know the new President, Dr. Chiu Wei, a very intelligent man. In fact, he was present at the last dinner of the Fromm Institute. We always had a very nice relationship not only with the top people--but were involved with a number of things that were done there. but all of it, Mrs. Dorfman, I don't think it's even worthwhile for anyone to know.

Dorfman: It will give researchers an idea of how things work.

Samuel Bronfman and the Seagram Company

Dorfman: I know that you admired Samuel Bronfman. Please tell me why.

Fromm: Samuel Bronfman was an outstanding business man. He had tremendous foresight, and knew or anticipated things long before anyone else. And my late partner, Franz Sichel, knew Samuel Bronfman quite well. He had visited him with his wife when my partner, at that time, lived in Berlin. When Franz Sichel came to the United States, Samuel Bronfman gave him a job. Then later Franz Sichel and I formed the partnership of Fromm and Sichel Importers, Inc., and I was introduced to Sam. I had great admiration for him because he was absolutely insistent that everything had to be of the highest quality.

Sometimes people thought he was in the bootleg business. Well, he really wasn't. In Canada, he sold to people who bootlegged it later, but in Canada it was perfectly legal to sell liquor. He was an extremely smart man and after I dealt with him for a year or so, I felt that the man started to respect me. Then we became very good friends. He was very helpful to me whenever we needed something because Seagram became the largest partner in our firm. Whatever we suggested to him, he'd say go ahead and do it.

A Valued Business and Personal Relationship

Fromm: He helped me enormously with good advice. He always was a very busy man, and ours was a comparatively small business. He always had time and if he didn't have time during the day, he'd say to me, "Alfred, come over to the St. Regis Hotel." He had a big

Fromm: apartment there. "Have dinner with me and we can talk." Then we'd talk for three, four hours which was very strenuous because he was extremely sharp and intelligent. You had to be careful of what you told him because he never forgot anything.

Here is his picture. [pointing at a photograph on office wall] In the middle, this is Samuel Bronfman. He gave this to me with a very nice dedication and I have some other mementos from him. I always have been on very friendly terms with the Bronfman family and with the sons, Edgar and Charles. Edgar in New York, and Charles in Montreal. They head the worldwide Seagram business.

Dorfman: You say his most important traits were his intelligence and his demand that everything be of the highest quality?

Fromm: Yes.

Dorfman: Can you give me some examples?

Fromm: Well, when I first met him, I was very unsure of myself. I never had talked to a man of that importance. It was many years ago and we were still a small firm. I was prepared to tell him everything about our firm. After we sat down--he had invited us for lunch--he said to me, "Well, Alfred, what can I do to help you make better wine?" That sold the man to me. He never asked me how much money do you make, and what you think you can make in the future. He knew that Franz Sichel and I would do the right thing. He had a great feeling about people. You know that certain people instinctively have the feeling that they are or are not dealing with the right kind of persons.

So, I told him what he could do to assist us and they sent us out some of their experts. When we went into the Christian Brother's Brandy business we had the same old stills as everyone else. And Sam said to us, "You need different and better stills." I said, "There's nobody to build them. There's nobody who knows anything about it." He said, "We have the people who build them." And he sent his top experts out from the distilling business and they designed a still for the Christian Brothers which is still a unique still in California. It's probably the reason why Christian Brother's Brandy was always a leading brandy in the country. We made a better product.

Things of that sort which he did for us, and how to blend brandies and other matters were of invaluable advice. I listened very carefully to what he had to say. But there was a very close personal relationship. Unfortunately, he died some years ago and I was a pallbearer at his funeral.

Dorfman: That's too bad. When he gave you advice, were you then affiliated in the business sense?

Fromm: Yes, before we were affiliated with him, and then after we were affiliated with him. But, of course, he saw the balance sheets and then we talked about it. He said, "You know, you are doing okay." That was all he said and that was good enough. [laughter]

Dorfman: Well, he was a man, then, who gathered his information first, and a great visionary.

Fromm: Yes, yes, he was. I had the greatest admiration and respect for that man.

Dorfman: What other experiences did you have with him?

Fromm: I told you, Sam asked me what he could do to help. When I made my will, I asked him how I should do certain things. He gave me some invaluable advice. One was that if one of the spouses is financially not in the same class as the other, be sure in your will that you leave a bequest to the other spouse, too. So, if the wife is the one who has more money, and the man has much less or visa-versa, this can lead to great complications. I have told this to many people and they have been grateful. We have always included this in our own wills. Money is a very good thing, but can be a very bad thing, too.

Dorfman: So, that is a good way then to use money as an enabler.

Fromm: Yes. Sam was a very charitable person. He was the President of the World Jewish Congress for many years. His son Edgar is now, and Sam involved me in that. We had a few meetings on that in our home and raised quite some money. There was a dinner given by the World Jewish Congress in my honor. I received a beautiful silver kiddush cup with a very nice inscription and Samuel Bronfman's signature embossed on it. Whenever I was in New York, he always would see me although there were sometimes many people waiting for him.

Dorfman: Obviously, the relationship had a great deal of meaning to him as well.

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Fromm: One thing I can say about Sam was--you know, a man who had such a tremendous amount of money and power, can become very suspicious. Many people have some intention of asking for something or involve them in something--which I never did. And I knew Sam trusted me. That took a few years to build such a relationship, naturally. That's why whatever we wanted that was reasonable, and I didn't ask for anything that wasn't, he would just say, go ahead and do it.

Fromm: So, I ran this firm for the last twenty, thirty years. Even though Seagram's was the majority stockholder, Fromm and Sichel was run completely autonomously. And I think we were the only firm in this giant Seagram's concern that had that privilege.

Dorfman: As a result of the relationship-?

Fromm: Of the relationship with Sam, and then later with his sons. It was a relationship of complete trust and confidence. We did well too, which didn't hurt. You know, most of the large firms, they interfere in almost everything. Large firms are the killers of small business very often. But Seagram's did not interfere whatsoever, until I retired. And then the firm was sold. One of the good reasons why the firm was sold was the fact that I was retiring and I was 79 years old. Because I was retiring, there was no one in the Seagram organization to deal with a religious Catholic order like the Christian Brothers.

Dorfman: How did Mr. Bronfman's sons differ?

Fromm: Well, Edgar who is Seagram's Chairman of the Board in New York is a very intelligent man, a good personal friend, too. His other son, Charles, who lives in Montreal, handles the Canadian and other business and a good personal friend of ours, too. We get along very well. I must say in those almost forty years that we were with Seagram's, we never had a cross word either with any one of the Bronfman family or with any one of their top executives. But I made it my business only to discuss things with their top executives and not get involved on the lower level, because that's where the trouble mostly starts. And of course, the lower level didn't like it at all that I, who owned much less of the firm than Seagram did, had such complete autonomy.

Dorfman: Who didn't like it?

Fromm: The lower level people: the insurance people and the financial people. In fact, we did many things better than they did. But we had to. [laughter]

Dorfman: And so the relationship with the sons, Edgar and Charles, continues to this day. Do you still see them?

Fromm: Oh, yes. We maintain our contact with them. We know Sam's wife Sadie who lives in Montreal. She has had her ninetieth birthday. Our families know each other well.

SAMUEL BRONFMAN
1430 Peel Street
MONTREAL 2, CANADA

March 12, 1971.

Mr. Alfred Fromm,
Fromm & Sichel, Inc.,
1255 Post Street,
San Francisco, California 94109.

My dear Alfred,

I am looking at your heartwarming letter of February 25th. I have not been able to reply to it sooner because as you know I was in New York and then have had a string of birthday parties culminating in a large Industry Party at Ottawa the day before yesterday so today I am back at the office.

As I approached my 80th Birthday it gave me a great deal of food for thought of what has happened in our world in the past 80 years of my life and reminiscing my own life in relationship to what has happened in the world, I have some wonderful memories of my associations in the development of my personal life, my family life and my business life. In all three I have been a most fortunate man. I have enjoyed in my business life many friendships - yea romances - and one of the outstanding business romances in my life has been my happy relationship with Franz and yourself. Let us pray that we continue in good health and that we may enjoy our very pleasant relationships and continue to be happy with our families and with our good deeds.

With my warmest regards to Hanna and yourself and family, I am

Affectionately,

Sam

SENT TO EVERY MEMBER OF THE
FROMM & SICHEL ORGANIZATION.

IN MEMORIAM - SAMUEL BRONFMAN

1891 - 1971

On July 13, 1971, Mr. Samuel Bronfman, the founder, builder and Chairman of the Board of the Seagram empire, was laid to rest. In his memory all the activities of our firm stopped on this day. I attended the funeral in Montreal, and having known Mr. Sam for over thirty years I believe that you would like to know more about this man who, already in his lifetime, was a legendary figure in our industry.

Over these many years my late partner Franz Sichel and I were indeed fortunate to have his friendship and trust and the benefit of his wise counsel.

It would be redundant to dwell on Mr. Bronfman's success in building an enterprise that stretches to all corners of the globe and is the largest in our industry throughout the world. I had the privilege on many occasions to observe him as the big-hearted, warm and lovable person he was, with a deep concern for others. Mr. Sam was an activist in numerous charities, who gave fully of himself in addition to his large financial contributions.

Almost every time I saw him, Mr. Sam stressed the dignity of business and people and the need to earn the consumer's lasting respect. Highest quality in product was almost an obsession with him, a point on which I never saw him compromise. By his example he has immeasurably lifted the status of the whole liquor industry in this country, to which he has left a lasting legacy.

Samuel Bronfman will be remembered, not only as an empire builder, but as a good and kind human being. I revered this man who, through his example, had a great influence on my life. His passing is an enormous personal loss for all those who were fortunate enough to have known him well.

Mr. Sam, during his lifetime, has wisely provided for good and capable successors to direct the world-wide business which he founded. In his sons he has raised men of proven ability who will follow his example of leadership.

Alfred Fromm.

ALFRED FROMM

The Wine Museum, San Francisco; Now the Seagram Museum, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

Dorfman: I understand that the Wine Museum has been moved to Canada.

Fromm: Partly to Canada, and the most valuable part, the glass collection, is now at the de Young Museum in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco.

Dorfman: The glass collection is at the de Young.

Fromm: Because this is really what the core value of the museum antiques was. Probably with between half a million and a million dollars, so it's a sizable, a fabulous collection. There is a special room at the de Young Museum for the Franz Sichel Glass Collection.

Dorfman: What about the museum itself, which was moved to Canada? We do know that the museum was moved to Canada at the time that the firm, Fromm and Sichel, was sold. I wonder what thoughts you've had about the change of location.

Fromm: The Seagram Museum is located in Waterloo, Ontario, which is about an hour away from Toronto. It's a large museum, and it has, I think, thirty-seven thousand square feet, and a very valuable collection that the Seagram people have assembled over some time. There are antiques that are particularly interesting to the production of spirits and a very sizable collection of wine antiques, not only from the San Francisco Wine Museum, but also antiques that they have acquired. A very valuable part of the wine collection is my own library, which has one of the most valuable libraries of old wine books, some of them very rare. I contributed this to the "Friends of Samuel Bronfman Foundation," and they turned it over to the Seagram Museum. Mr. Sam was my patron saint, so I thought that this would be a fitting thing to do.

The value of those books is hard to say, but it could be 100 to 150,000 dollars. They were some very rare and valuable books collected over fifty years.

Dorfman: What kind of books, for example?

Fromm: Strictly having to do with wine. Books that were written about wine. I think our earliest books were from between 1500 and 1600. They are in Latin, Italian, German--in all languages because the wine culture in English-speaking countries came much later. So that we had about five or six hundred books, but very carefully selected and very rare.

Dorfman: So that the focus was on the production of wine?

Fromm: The production of wine, the knowledge of wine, and the place of wine--whatever was written many years ago. And then, of course, there were quite a few volumes dealing with wine that were from this century.

Dorfman: What has been your involvement with the museum since that time?

Fromm: Well, I was the founder of the Wine Museum in San Francisco. We had a museum director who worked under me, but I was the guiding spirit of the museum. I think I told you that we had about a million and a half visitors during the museum's San Francisco existence. It was like a little jewel-box, with selected, small exhibits. We had a tremendous amount of publicity all over the world.

Dorfman: And your involvement since its move to Ontario?

Fromm: I have no further involvement in it except always keeping in touch with the director of the Seagram Museum, giving him some suggestions.

Dorfman: How have they changed the museum since its move?

Fromm: They added the collections of the Wine Museum in San Francisco to their own and it made a very beautiful presentation.

Dorfman: Do you have any feelings about any changes or publicity that the museum might benefit by?

Fromm: Yes, the Seagram Museum received very wide publicity, and it probably is today, or certainly will be, the leading museum in North America dealing with spirits and wines.

More About the Wine Business

Dorfman: The plaque at the entrance to your suite of offices indicates the Brandy Association. In what way is that related to the Brandy Association of California and Brandy Associates?

Fromm: It's the same. But Brandy Associates is a division of the Seagram Company in New York and this is its actual legal name, but it's known as Brandy Association of California. I'm chairman of the board. I was chairman of the board of Fromm and Sichel but the firm was sold back to the Christian Brothers. They wanted to retain the name of Fromm and Sichel because it was a very respected name throughout the country.

XI ORGANIZATIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND AWARDS

California Medical Clinic for Psychotherapy; Vice Chairman

Dorfman: You were Vice Chairman of California Medical Clinic for Psychotherapy?

Fromm: I was for a number of years. It was an organization that rendered psychiatric services at very low prices. There were doctors in charge and some other personnel who were not medical doctors, but had a license to practice in psychology. It was quite a good organization, but they were in a terrible financial mess. They had accounts receivable that went back for years by people that just hadn't paid, and they always were in financial straits. So, I contributed a good sum and with the help of some other people, straightened out their financial situation.

Dorfman: You gave them financial and organizational advice.

Fromm: Yes. I didn't try to interfere in psychiatry because I'm not qualified for that. I always have stuck to those things that at least I know something about.

Dorfman: I understand that the clients of this clinic were primarily middle class.

Fromm: Middle class and lower-middle class.

Dorfman: And they were based here in San Francisco?

Fromm: Partly in the avenues, I think they are still there.

Dorfman: What sort of contribution do you feel that the organization has made?

Fromm: Well, it gave many people who could not afford to go to a psychiatrist the opportunity to get counseling either in a group or individual when it was necessary at very low rates.

Dorfman: I understand that your role in the group began in 1964 until 1968 or 1969?

Fromm: Yes, that's about right.

St. Mary's College; Board of Regents

Dorfman: Before we go on to your work in music, would you like to tell me about your role as regent with St. Mary's College?

Fromm: My wife and I have always been very interested in education. And I knew the people in St. Mary's College very well because St. Mary's College is owned by the Christian Brothers. Our firm was the world-wide distributer for the Christian Brothers wines and brandy located at Napa. I got acquainted with the people of the college in Moraga in the East Bay. I could see that a lot could be done. There was a new president, Brother Mel Anderson, who is still there as president, a first class, capable man. The large deficits that they had were wiped out gradually. Today, it's really a flourishing institution.

So, I was elected to the Board of Regents of St. Mary's College. I was there for many years, but now I'm not so active anymore. I'm now a regent emeritus.

Dorfman: How long were you a regent?

Fromm: It must have started in 1970. I was elected to the Board of Regents of St. Mary's College in 1970, and stayed until 1984 when I became a regent emeritus.

Now, my late partner, Franz Sichel in New York, was also very much interested in education. And I made it possible for St. Mary's College to receive, after my partner's death, about five hundred thousand dollars from the Sichel Foundation to build a special building for biology that was very badly needed. It is named the Franz W. Sichel Biology Building. But this was done after I had been a regent for quite a number of years.

I have been active on the board of regents and there were a lot of problems which always came up because the school was in bad financial shape when I joined. Over the years, it really made very wonderful progress.

Today, they turn people away if their grades are not sufficiently good because all their facilities are fully used. They have about twelve hundred students. They have many Christian Brothers as professors who have studied for many years all over

Fromm: the world. And then they have some outside professors and teachers too. It's a very good school and it became co-educational. That, of course, made a big difference. But you know, in the early years Moraga was not easily accessible. But today, the East Bay has built up so much and is such a flourishing part of the country. This has made a big difference because it's easy to get to now.

Dorfman: What is the greatest personal contribution that you made as a regent to St. Mary's?

Fromm: Well, that I was able to get the financing and the donations for the Franz Sichel Biology Building. Brother Mel Anderson, the president, is a good personal friend of mine, too. And I have helped throughout the years wherever it was necessary. They've founded a museum that was endowed by the Hearst Foundation, a very nice little museum. And as I knew a bit about the museum business, I was on that committee for that museum and have been able to give some advice.

Founding Member of the President's Club

Dorfman: You were also a founding member of the President's Club.

Fromm: Yes, I was the president of the President's Club for many years. [chuckle] When I took this job, we had maybe thirty or forty members. And by contacting many people personally and in writing, they have now about three hundred and fifty members who paid, at that time, a thousand dollars a year. Today, I think it's twelve hundred dollars a year. I have made a much larger contribution for many years, and still continue to do so.

Dorfman: And the President's--?

Fromm: The President's Club raises substantial money for the college and they can use those funds for their regular expenses. It has become an important part of the financial arm of the college.

Dorfman: That enters the general fund for the college?

Fromm: Yes.

Dorfman: How long have you been a member of that club?

Fromm: It may be ten or twelve years.

Honorary Alumnus, 1981; Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters, May 1974

Dorfman: You were also elected an honorary alumnus in 1981.

Fromm: As you know, I have no college education. They elected me an honorary alumnus. I really don't know why, [chuckle] but it was really in some way, maybe to thank me for the many things that I had done for St. Mary's College. I think I told you, I have an honorary doctor's degree from St. Mary's College.

Dorfman: Tell me about that, please.

Fromm: After a few years, the college felt very strongly that they owed me something. Although I never asked them for anything, they asked me if I would accept an honorary doctor's degree. I said I certainly would. And they gave me a D.H.L., Doctor of Humane Letters. I received this in 1974, and the bishop of Sacramento was the one who gave the address and award. I think this is pretty well what he said. [showing degree]

Dorfman: In addition, you received a degree of Doctor of Public Service, 1979 from the University of San Francisco.

Fromm: My wife got the same degree because the Fromm Institute was a joint undertaking of my wife and me, from the University of San Francisco, 1979.

Dorfman: Two honorary degrees.

Fromm: They're the only degrees that I have. [chuckle]

Dorfman: Those are very impressive achievements and you must be very proud of them.

Fromm: It just happened when I got the honorary doctor's degree from St. Mary's College that my son David visited us in California. So, he came with me and my wife.

Dorfman: Did you have anything else that you might add about your involvement with St. Mary's College?

Fromm: I think that covers it pretty well. I was very active there for a number of years. And I was highly pleased with the progress made under President Brother Mel Anderson of St. Mary's College. We worked very closely together.

Tuition is quite high there, as in any private college--so there's always the problem of where the funds come from. They have a lot of minority students over in St. Mary's College and quite a lot of scholarships.

ALFRED FROMM - As an exponent of the best tradition of European culture and refinement, as a respected and successful businessman and as a beloved benefactor and Regent of Saint Mary's College, we salute you.

You brought with you the wisdom and business acumen of your ancestors' two hundred years experience in the wine business when you emigrated to the United States from Germany. Convinced that the future of the wine business was in California's premium wine districts, you secured representation of the Christian Brothers winery in Napa, California, in 1937 and have been associated with it ever since.

Together with your late beloved partner, Franz W. Sichel, you made the Christian Brothers name synonomous with excellence. As the wines and brandies you distribute grow in popularity, the work of the Christian Brothers also flourished - supported by the emoluments you made possible.

The largesse of your heart is manifested in the beautiful Wine Museum recently opened near the waterfront in San Francisco. There, for all to enjoy, is a tribute to the romance and history of winemaking, as well as the exquisite glass collection of Mr. Sichel. The museum is the realization of a longtime dream to share your love of a noble art with the world.

Your philanthrophy toward charitable and cultural organizations is attested to by your numerous associations: with the Jewish National Fund, San Francisco Opera Association and San Francisco Conservatory of Music to name a few. The Fromm legacy spreads throughout the United States, as your brother Paul is the founder and president of the Fromm Music Foundation, which nurtures symphonic music in the Chicago area, and your twin brother Herbert is musical director of Temple Israel in Boston and foremost composer of liturgical music. Your late brother Norman was the founder of the San Francisco Chamber Music Society.

As a fitting monument to your generosity toward Saint Mary's College, and the love of your late partner for the Christian Brothers, the Franz W. Sichel Biology Center will soon rise on the Saint Mary's campus. It will ever testify to the loyalty and largesse you have displayed throughout your life, as your plea as President of the Franz W. Sichel Foundation made a grant for its construction possible.

On the occasion of its one hundred eleventh commencement, Saint Mary's College of California is pleased to recognize your many contributions to it and society by conferring upon you the Degree of Doctor of Humane Letters.

Text of Alfred Fromm's Honorary Degree conferred by Saint Mary's College
May 25, 1974

Alfred Fromm receiving Honorary Degree, Doctor of Humane Letters. St. Mary's College, May 1974.

Dorfman: So that funding is all the more a problem.

Fromm: Yes, it is.

Dorfman: Is that the major problem of a small private school such as St. Mary's?

Fromm: No, there's funding, and then there is academic excellence of a school. They have improved this tremendously. I know St. Mary's College in California well because of their relationship to the Christian Brothers. And knowing the provincial of the Christian Brothers very well, under whose direction the college was run, they had very hard times for a long period.

Music in the Vineyards; Co-Founder

Dorfman: We can go on to your involvement and the contributions that you've made to music. I'd like first to ask you about Music in the Vineyards.

Fromm: Our oldest brother, Norman, was quite knowledgeable in music and always very much interested. And my twin brother, Herbert, is a professional musician. So, music played a big role in our home as we grew up, even though I don't play an instrument, nor do I really know very much about music except that I enjoy it.

In Paul Masson, there is a big terrace and it overlooks the whole Santa Clara Valley. It's just beautiful. Outstanding scenically. Then there is that old winery. The portal of the winery is probably three or four hundred years old. It came from Italy. In the little chateau we had some guests up there, and my wife talked to Kurt Herbert Adler, who was the general director of the opera, and she said, "Wouldn't it be a marvelous place to have a concert for the people?" We didn't know what the acoustics would be. Then the Ford Foundation had this institution near Saratoga where professors from all over the world came for a sabbatical. They came up and played, and then we found that the acoustics were excellent.

We followed up on that. My wife and my brother Norman did all the work to make this possible. My role was a different one. I was, at that time, the president of Paul Masson. The firm had developed and had become much larger, and we needed a lot of money. There was a question: could we afford to do this. But we all thought this was such a worthwhile thing to do, and we were the first ones who had outdoor concerts. I think we appropriated five thousand dollars to start the whole thng. Today, it would cost many, many times more. But except for the music, we did all the work ourselves in order to save money.

Fromm: At that time, the road up was very bad. It was very curvy and very narrow. We had some hay-wagons and took the people up there. They loved having this beautiful view and then during the intermissions, we served them some champagne, Paul Masson champagne. And it became very popular. We had at first four or five hundred people because it was all we could accommodate. Then we created some additional parking spaces and now they have about a thousand people. The concerts are every year and they are always completely sold out. There are hundreds and hundreds of people who write in for tickets and whom we cannot accommodate--

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Dorfman: So, you wouldn't have the space for more than a thousand people?

Fromm: No, and we didn't want any more because it becomes almost unmanageable. Many, many people came down from San Francisco and from other areas. Then, of course, many people came up from Santa Clara. It became a very popular thing. In the meantime it has been expanded substantially. But all the performances are on a very high level. We had some really outstanding musicians play there. We gave some small operas, too. And you know when you sit outside with this beautiful view in nice weather and have some champagne, you get people who just loved it and still do.

Then one of the reasons, too, for doing this was that we were newcomers in California.

Dorfman: What year did this begin?

Fromm: This is now twenty years ago. And I felt that besides the artistic value, that it would have a very good publicity value, too, for Paul Masson. Our competitors who sometimes didn't look so fondly at us because we were successful in our business, we invited them, and they came. I think it has created a very good atmosphere for the firm and for us personally. If you are Jewish, you know, there is always this talk that Jews take the business away. But we created a business that didn't exist. So, we didn't take it away from anyone and everybody had the same chance.

My brother Norman ran the concerts and spent considerable time selecting the programs. He was really the soul of Music in the Vineyards!

Dorfman: It has been a model?

Fromm: Yes. It's now done in Napa Valley and many other places. It's really a very nice thing during the summer.

Dorfman: What was the most successful program over the years?

Fromm: It's hard to say which one was the most successful because every year the program was carefully accepted. We had Sandor Salgo, a Hungarian, as conductor. I think he is still there today and was a professor of music at Stanford.

Dorfman: And what kind of a future do you see for Music in the Vineyards?

Fromm: Well, I hope this will be continued for many more years because it's such a successful and pleasant undertaking.

Dorfman: Do you anticipate any changes?

Fromm: I don't think so. I'm not involved in this anymore. There's more modern music today which twenty years ago was not as popular as it is today. But we always have tried to have at least one piece of modern music right from the beginning. We felt this was a good way to present it and get the people acquainted with it.

Dorfman: So, the breadth of this program has broadened?

Fromm: Yes, there were generally very good critiques in the newspapers. It really was a nice thing to do.

Norman Fromm, Founder; San Francisco Chamber Music Society

Dorfman: Your brother, Norman, who was the co-founder of Music in the Vineyards, was also the founder of the San Francisco Chamber Music Society, I understand.

Fromm: Yes, he was. He died about ten or twelve years ago.

Dorfman: What can you tell me about your brother's work with the San Francisco Chamber Music Society?

Fromm: Well, my brother Norman was very knowledgeable about music and he knew almost everybody in the music world here and in other cities, too. He was able to get the cooperation of outstanding performers. It was a new organization and of course, like everything else it takes money. So, I contributed accordingly as did quite a few of our friends. We sold tickets at a fairly low price because, you know, the ticket prices that we have today for good concerts was something that didn't exist in those days.

Dorfman: Yes. And then when we discussed accessibility--

Fromm: The concerts were held in various places. In the last years, I think, it was mostly at the hall in the Fireman's Fund Building in California Street. Then there was this stipend made for "Norman

Fromm: Fromm Concerts" after he had died. And we have helped with this. But now the San Francisco Chamber Music Society, I think, is going to be dissolved because there are not enough people anymore who have an interest. There are always new things coming up. And as you know, all this is the product of a person. There was no one there who really would spend the time and the interest as my brother had. So, I belive it went on for something like twelve or fifteen years. But it was definitely a contribution to the cultural life here.

Paul Fromm, Founder; Fromm Music Foundation, Harvard University

Dorfman: Your brother Paul, it has been said, is the most famous musically. What can you add to what you told me earlier?

Fromm: Yes. He's the youngest of us. He's about two years younger than I am. He was in our firm in Bingen and was very active there. But his love was always music. When he was able to come to this country, he went to Chicago and joined a wine firm there which we later bought. He started his own firm, Geeting and Fromm. It was quite successful because some of the salesmen who had worked for us in Germany, when they immigrated to the United States, wanted to work for him. We had a lot of experience in selling to consumers. And he built a very nice and profitable business.

As soon as he started to make some money and was financially independent he started the Fromm Music Foundation in 1952 in Chicago. He had a group of advisors, all outstanding musicians. Their aim was to promote only modern music because at that time it was almost impossible to get modern music performed in a large city. They always perform good old pieces that everybody loves. What my brother did was: after the board of the Fromm Music Foundation accepted a work, they guaranteed that it would be performed and it would be published. The composers had no chance otherwise. They were sometimes salesmen of neckties, of shoes, or teachers or whatever jobs they had. You certainly couldn't make a living on modern music.

So, the new works were published and performed, which was something these young people who wrote modern music never were able to do for themselves. And some of them discovered by the Fromm Music Foundation have become leading modern composers.

Dorfman: Are there names that come to mind?

Fromm: I can't remember the names. I know very little about modern music.

Fromm: My brother has been named one of the most valuable citizens in the cultural life of Chicago. Later on, as he got older, he wanted to make sure that the Fromm Music Foundation would go on. He turned it over to Harvard University. It's now the Fromm Music Foundation at Harvard University. But my brother is still the president of it. He felt that Harvard would continue this and he has endowed it with a very substantial amount, so that the money for it is available. Paul received two honorary doctoral degrees and is considered the leading personality in the world of serious modern music in the United States. He has written many articles about modern music for the New York Times and other leading newspapers and magazines.

Dorfman: I understand that from 1952 until 1957, he aided fifty young composers to write ambitious music.

Fromm: It could well be.

Dorfman: Epic Lable, Twentieth Century Composer Series apparently issued the recordings.

Fromm: He died at eighty years of age in July, 1987. His obituary appeared in the New York Times. I always thought of my brother as a first-rate intellectual who made the largest contribution in our family to this country.

San Francisco Conservatory of Music; Board of Trustees

Dorfman: Another of your efforts was with the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. How did you happen to become involved?

Fromm: Through some friends of mine who were on the board of the conservatory. There was a lot of trouble at that time. The director wasn't the right man and their financial situation was very unsound. They asked me if I would join them as a trustee which I did many years ago.

Dorfman: About what year would you say?

Fromm: It must be easily twenty-five years ago.

I have helped them financially. The director is there for twenty years by now. Milton Salkind is also a personal friend of ours. He's doing an outstanding job. Today the conservatory is one of the leading conservatories in the United States. But it wasn't at that time. Now that we have good professional people handling this, our job was to see that things run right.

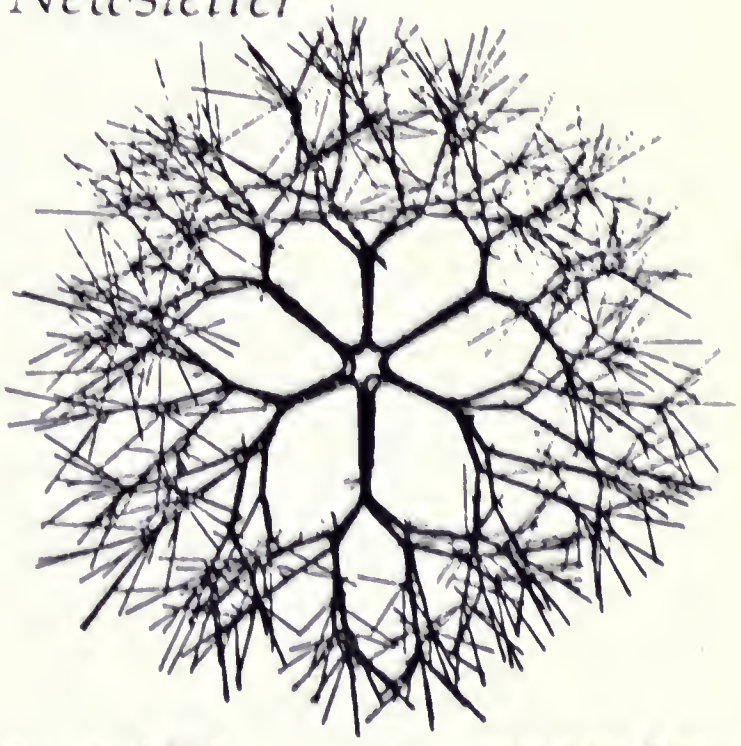
Fromm, Krause Rooms Dedicated

On May 4, Conservatory President, Milton Salkind, and Board of Trustees Chairman, John C. Beckman, presided at the dedication of the Hanna and Alfred Fromm Room at the Conservatory. The room naming was attended by Conservatory Board members and friends of the Fromms, and included a short concert by Conservatory students Jeff Lee, Wende Namkung, Holly Houser, Elizabeth Van Loon and Steve Kalm and remarks by Mr. Beckman. The Board of Trustees voted to name the room, which is one of the classrooms in the new Conservatory building, to commemorate the support the Fromms have given the Conservatory over the years both financially and otherwise. Mr. Fromm has been a member of the Board for many years. Together with Mrs. Fromm, he has been involved in and supported numerous San Francisco community activities and has had a long and distinguished business career as Chairman of Fromm and Sichel. Mr. Beckman made special mention of the frankness, honesty and humility of the Fromms and their true feeling for people and the community.

At informal ceremonies on July 9, Milton Salkind presided at the dedication of the Stella R. Krause Piano Room at the Conservatory. Made possible by the generous contributions of Herman R. Krause, Madeline Altshuler and Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Nairin, the room is named in honor of their mother. The dedication ceremonies included a short concert by Conservatory student, Steve Warzycki and a buffet lunch which was attended by friends and relatives of Mrs. Krause's children and Conservatory Board members, Curtis M. Caton, June Kingsley, David Hall, and Kris Getz.

Mr. Salkind remarked upon the continuing support of the Krause family. He said people like them epitomize the commitment needed to keep an institution like the Conservatory going. He also announced that Mr. Herman Krause made a gift of a Steinway grand piano that is now in the Stella R. Krause Room.

The San Francisco Conservatory of Music Newsletter



Vol. 3, No. 1, Fall 1976 *Milton Salkind, President*

Fromm: There is a room at the conservatory which is called "The Alfred and Hanna Fromm" room because we have been connected with the conservatory and have helped in varied and rather substantial ways over the years.

Dorfman: I understand that that room was dedicated in 1976.

Fromm: Yes, that's about right.

San Francisco Opera Association; Board of Directors

Dorfman: The San Francisco Opera Association is the next organization to which you have contributed much time and effort.

Fromm: Well, when we came to San Francisco, Kurt Herbert Adler with his family came to San Francisco, too. We have known each other now for maybe forty-five years. And we became very friendly. He was at that time chorus master and worked his way up. He's an extremely capable man. My wife and my oldest brother always were very interested in the musical part of it and I was more interested in the business side of it. They asked me to join their board of directors. There were very few Jewish people at that time on the board. Now that has changed. I accepted it and have been on the board for many years. I really don't know when I joined them, but it must be easily twenty-five years or more.

Dorfman: What was the most difficult problem that the association had at that time?

Fromm: Always money. There was never enough and Kurt Adler consulted me quite a few times. There were certain problems and I said, we should do it this way or the other way. So, as far as the musical part is concerned, as I mentioned before, I have made no contribution.

Every year we have a box at the opera. But not on Tuesdays. We originally went on Tuesday which is the so-called fashionable day. Well, I was working very hard and on Tuesday--run home, eat, and go to the opera and then your tongue is hanging out. So, we changed this to a box on Friday, and you know, on Friday you have much more leisure because there's Saturday coming. So, for years now, we have a box together with some other people on Friday.

Dorfman: I understand that you haven't been involved in musical decisions for the opera. But how would you say the problems with which you assisted have changed over the years?

Fromm: Well, some came after Kurt Herbert Adler retired as General Director of the San Francisco Opera. A new director was appointed and there were a lot of problems. What could one do? The top officers of the opera called on me and we had lunch together. We discussed how the opera could be put in a situation where there would no longer be a deficit. This has been always a very troublesome matter. We have given substantial amounts to the opera to help out. This is necessary. Without money, just nothing happens.

Dorfman: From your experience, how do you think that audiences are changing?

Fromm: There are a lot of young people now.

Dorfman: More so, now?

Fromm: It's amazing. And it's not as formal, you know. In former years it was the playground of the so-called society. Whenever I was with the other directors or officers, I always said that you have to change that. Society is getting old or dying out and their children don't have the same interest anymore. They don't have the money after the inheritance taxes are paid and the fortune is distributed to all the children. And it certainly did change the picture.

You have an entirely different group of people today running the opera than twenty years ago. I could foresee this very well. I said, "Well, you've got to get some unions to make it possible to get tickets at a low price or at certain performances, and you must attract the young people." And they really have reached out to all of California.

I think in the restructuring of the opera, this was important. It was something that I was very outspoken about because I could see that those old people one day wouldn't be there anymore. And there wouldn't be the support for the opera, that the opera had to get their support on a very much broader basis.

Dorfman: So, you see a means of supporting the attendance of the young by getting organizations to subsidize those tickets. Are there any other ways?

Fromm: Well, we have a number of sub-organizations in the opera like the Medallion Society. I think you have to contribute a minimum of five thousand dollars. Then you are invited to some of the dress rehearsals and you have some dinners and all those things. But that has never meant anything to me.

Dorfman: Do you attend them?

Fromm: Some of them, yes. My wife is much more interested in music than I am.

Dorfman: Why the opera and the conservatory rather than other musical institutions, perhaps the ballet, for example?

Fromm: My wife is a graduate of the Joos School in Germany which was at that time the most famous ballet school in Germany. She graduated as choreographer and when she was younger she was a dancer, too. She has much more interest in the ballet, but to me personally, the ballet is not anything that interests me. Maybe it's just ignorance.

Dorfman: Perhaps experience. Was your experience in Germany with opera?

Fromm: It wasn't much with opera because we lived in a small town, you know. At that time, if you had to travel for two hours, it was considered a long trip. If you live in America, distances have a different meaning than they were in Europe.

Dorfman: And you have been a longtime member of the San Francisco Commonwealth Club?

Fromm: Yes, about twenty-five years or thirty years. You know what that is, they have some outstanding speakers. It's a very good organization.

Dorfman: And you are also currently a member of the Concordia Club?

Fromm: Yes, also for twenty-five or thirty years.

Dorfman: Which is a social organization.

Fromm: Yes. And I am a member of Villa Taverna, which is a private dining club.

Awards

Dorfman: You received an honorary doctorate from the University of San Francisco for your work with the Fromm Institute for Lifelong Learning.

Fromm: Yes, I became an Honorary Doctor of Public Service in May 1979. My wife was awarded a degree as well.

Jefferson Award for Community Service; The American Institute of Public Service

Dorfman: In 1980, you received the Jefferson Award for Community Service from the American Institute of Public Service. Tell me about that, please.

Fromm: Well, I didn't know anything about it. But I was nominated. You know you never know about this beforehand.

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--they felt that I had rendered some public service.

Dorfman: I see. And the reception was at the Examiner?

Fromm: At the Examiner, yes.

Dorfman: I see, and you received a medal as well? There was a long article in the Examiner giving a vitae of each honoree.

Fromm: Yes.

Wine Spectator; First Annual Distinguished Service Award

Dorfman: You also, in 1982, received an award from the Wine Spectator.

Fromm: Yes. The Wine Spectator is the leading publication of the wine industry for the whole country. They are the publishers of Impact. And Impact is the leading statistical publication for the wine and spirits industry. The Wine Spectator is part of it. They annually give a big dinner for the wine industry and they then select the leading restaurants with the best wine list in the country. They compete and it's a big thing. They always have three, four hundred people out here at the annual dinner.

It selects a person from the wine industry that has contributed to its success, and I was the first recipient of this honor. The second recipients after me in the following year were Ernest and Julio Gallo. The third year recipient was Robert Mondavi.

Dorfman: Prestigious company.

Fromm: Yes. Yes, you have the medal here.

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The gifts of wine and learning

By Mildred Hamilton

"IT IS NICE to give with warm hands," says Alfred Fromm, who also gives with a grateful heart.

The refugee who fled the Nazis to build a successful new life in the United States enjoys sharing. "I am fortunate in being able to help, and I like to see the results of it while I am alive."

In the business world, Fromm is known as the chairman of the board of Fromm & Sichel Inc., world-wide distributors of Christian Brothers wines. In the world of philanthropy, education and culture, he is known for innovative ideas and gifts that enhance Bay Area life and set examples copied across the country.

"I am happy here. This country has been good to me. Whatever I have done has been just a small repayment of what I owe the United States. You can't be a good citizen if you only take," said Fromm, an erect, impressive and elegantly tailored man with thick, wavy gray hair and a serious mien.

He sat in his Beach Street office, richly paneled in wood and decorated with wine theme paintings and photographs, a few days after he and his twin brother Herbert, a Boston composer and author, had celebrated their 75th birthdays at a family gathering. "I blew out all 75 candles on my cake," he said with a smile.

Alfred Fromm is eligible to enroll in one of his favorite creations, the Fromm Institute at the University of San Francisco, which he and his wife Hanna founded in 1976 for education-yearning 50- to 90-year-olds.

He smiled at the prospect. "I don't plan to retire, but if I did, I would go back to school, and I would not want to go back with my grandchildren."

That was part of the sentiment behind the Fromm Institute, a university within a university where older students would be taught by retired professors but would be able to mix with younger students. Last year USF conferred the honorary degree, doctor of public service, on both Fromm and his wife in appreciation for the institute.

He views the institute as "something that had to be done and had never been done before. Eleven percent of today's population is over age 65, and by the year 2000, it will be 21 percent. This kind of institute for life-long learning prevents vegetation in retirement, and opens the joy of learning to all."

The Fromm Institute has attracted world-wide attention and is rapidly becoming a model. "We have had 88 universities and colleges write us after reading about it to ask for details to do something similar."

The wine merchant laments his own lack of formal schooling. "I left school at 15 to become a wine apprentice" in Germany, where his family had been in the wine business nearly 200 years. "I have had to learn by listening and by association."

He made his first trip to California in 1934, "during Prohibition, to make a study of the wine business that didn't exist then." Because he was Jewish, he fled Germany in 1936. He became a partner in a wine import firm, and eventually he was able to get his six brothers and sisters, his parents and other relatives out.

Fromm, who still has a hint of what he calls "my South Bavarian accent," recalled building a wine business. "If people know you are working hard and are honest, they will help. Mr. A.P. Giannini and the Bank of America helped at the start, when we needed it most. I haven't forgotten they gave me my first credit, without collateral. I used to go in at 8 a.m. and see Mr. Giannini; that was 40 years ago. He was very good to us when we needed it, and I have a great feeling of gratefulness. That is the only place we have ever done business."

Fromm & Sichel Inc. does a lot of business, distributing the Christian Brothers wines in 75 countries today.

His partner Franz Sichel died 11 years ago, and Fromm, who has been a regent of St. Mary's College for years, is particularly proud of the new biochemistry building, Sichel Hall, on the Moraga campus. The foundation bearing the Sichel name, of which Fromm is president, donated much of the cost of the building. Fromm received an honorary doctorate from St. Mary's in 1974.

He and his late brother Norman were involved in starting the Music in the Vineyards programs at the Paul Masson winery in Saratoga in the 1950s. Now a popular tradition, the vineyard concerts have been widely copied.

Hebrew University; Torch of Learning

Dorfman: Oh, that's lovely. First Annual Distinguished Service Award. We have a few more here. In 1984, you received the Torch of Learning from the Hebrew University. That was a joint award, was it?

Fromm: Yes, to my wife and to me. As you know, that was in recognition for our having founded and funded the Fromm Institute for Lifelong Learning at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

Dorfman: And then in 1980, you received a Founder's Medal?

Fromm: Oh, from the Hebrew University. We have received so many of those things from organizations and the Israel Bond Office because over the years we have given a substantial amount. We get all kinds of things, but I really don't count them anymore because I even don't know what to do with all of them.

Share Zedek Hospital, Israel; Founders' Stone Trophy

Dorfman: And then in 1977, you and Mrs. Fromm received a Founders' Stone Trophy for support of a hospital in Jerusalem.

Fromm: Yes, that's the Share Zedek Hospital. The grandfather of my wife, Abraham Gruenbaum, he was one of the founders of Share Zedek Hospital, Jerusalem in 1890. So, we always have been interested in Share Zedek and we have supported it.

Dorfman: And that was in recognition of that effort, continuing support?

Fromm: Yes.

Brandeis University Distinguished Community Service Award

Dorfman: And then in 1975, you received the Brandeis University Distinguished Community Service Award.

Fromm: Yes, at the Brandeis University Library the Alfred and Hanna Fromm Fund was established. But we have no direct involvement in Brandeis University.

Dorfman: This was a fund that was established?

Fromm: Yes, either a fund or a scholarship. It particularly benefited the library.

A Key to the City from Mayor Joseph Alioto, 1974

Dorfman: And then you also received the key to the city from Mayor Joseph Alioto.

Fromm: Yes, I have it right here. As I have told you before, I founded the Wine Museum of San Francisco. It was inaugurated on January 21, 1974. I asked Mayor Alioto, whom I knew quite well, if he would speak and make the official dedication, which he was very happy to do. He is a fabulous speaker. And after the ceremony he gave me the key to the city and said this was a special honor that he would be happy to have me accept. Now, I understand, the keys are not solid iron anymore. [laughter]

Dorfman: It's a very heavy piece, isn't it? While we're speaking of Mayor Alioto since you knew him so well, what can you tell me about your memories of him, particularly of when you worked with him.

Fromm: Well, I worked on a few things in the interest of the city. My wife and I, we knew him socially, and after his divorce, we knew his new wife, too. She is a very nice person. But this was more or less a social contact. I have not been involved too much in city affairs. It always has been a matter of fact for me because running the business was the first priority. If you don't make the money, you cannot give anything. So, I always knew that. But it had to have the first priority.

Memories of Kurt Adler, General Director, San Francisco Opera

Dorfman: What are your memories of Kurt Adler?

Fromm: Kurt Adler is a very capable man. He can be very rough with people, but he did something that very few other general directors of opera have done. He negotiated with the unions. He handled the musical parts, the whole administration and he's a very good money raiser. This is one of the greatest attributes for a general director of the opera today. You know, it's easier possibly to find experts in many phases of whatever it might be, but it's difficult to find a man who has a total concept of something. And Kurt Adler certainly had it. He got the most famous singers here, and he cajoled them. But they came. While he was there, I think, the financial situation of the opera was very much better.

And then the new man came, and there were some very sizable deficits. But we are now in the process of trying to cure this. Adler is a very excellent manager. Many people said that they

Fromm: couldn't get along with him because he was very rough, but, you know, sometimes, to deal with all the egos of the singers is not easy.

Dorfman: What are the greatest differences between Kurt Adler and Terence McEwen, his replacement?

Fromm: Well, Kurt Adler was an outstanding good administrator. He was so in all phases of the opera. He really lived it from early morning until late night, and a very forceful person. Now, McEwen, he comes from the recording business in London. He's a very personable guy and knows quite a lot about music, but in my opinion, he doesn't have the strength and the totality that Adler had in the job.

XII REFLECTIONS ON BUSINESS

[Date of Interview: May 22, 1987] ##

An Important Business Experience in 1942

Dorfman: Mr. Fromm, you were going to tell me about an important experience in 1942 that made a substantial change in your business career.

Fromm: Yes. As you know, I was a partner in the firm of Picker-Linz Importers, Inc., in New York, and we had the exclusive distribution rights of the Christian Brothers of Napa for their wines and brandy. This business developed very well, and I became the focal point of it because my partners in New York hardly knew anything about the wine business. They had, during the fourteen years of Prohibition, been in other professions. The Christian Brothers insisted that they only wanted to deal with me. The president of the firm at that time was Dave Boley, a very intelligent man, a hunchback, very small-minded and extremely jealous.

He was a bachelor for many years, but had an operation, met a nurse, and married her. She was an ambitious and jealous person and egged Boley on--that he was the president of the firm and he really should carry on all negotiations, why should I [Alfred Fromm] do it?--and in short, she made a lot of trouble. One day when I arrived at my office in San Francisco, the office was locked and there was a note that the keys had been changed and that I would not be able to enter by myself. An employee of the firm, and a friend of Boley, had come from New York to take charge of the office. Well, of course, that made me very angry because I was really the one who was running the firm. And I was responsible for the relationship with the Christian Brothers. No easy matter because you are dealing with members of a religious order with limited business experience. I had earned their trust with my dealings with them over a period of time.

Fromm: I called a well-known attorney in New York, Abe Pomerantz, whom I knew. His specialty was cases dealing with the protection of minority stockholders. I went to New York and saw him. In the

meantime, I received a letter from the firm that my partners wanted me out, and they would be willing to buy my stock at long terms and a low price. Well, I was furious! And my attorney said there was absolutely no good reason for the firm's actions.

Brother John, the manager of the Christian Brothers Winery, accompanied me when I went to New York. He told Mr. Boley and the other members that if I was not a member of the firm and in charge of the relationship with them, they would return to the provisions of the original contract and supply us only a minimum quantity of wine and brandy. That would have been only a fraction of what we needed for our business. We were, by that time, quite successful and prosperous. A short, armed truce was agreed upon.

The firm and Mr. Boley were represented by Judge Proskauer, the head of a very prominent law firm in New York. He said to me, "Well, I don't think that what the firm wants to do is right, do you? But you must straighten it out somehow." In other words, he felt that this was a personal vendetta that would be very harmful to the firm. In fact, I believe it would have been the end of the firm if they had succeeded, and of the very good salaries we were able to pay, and the end of our fine profits. So, we negotiated with the other partners and they decided, with very little foresight, to sell out to me, if I could raise the money.

I had talked before to a number of my largest distributors throughout the country, and they were quite willing to invest a certain amount of money, so that together with my own funds we could purchase, for cash, the stock of my partners. I had met Franz Sichel before. He came from Mainz which was very close to Bingen, from where we came, and our families were friends--my father, and probably my grandfather as well.

Dorfman: Then you had known Franz Sichel previously?

Fromm: While I hardly knew him personally, I knew the firm and the family well. And Franz said to me, "Why don't we get together and become partners?" I said, "That would be fine with me, but where do you get the money? I can put up my share of the capital and I have some good credit in the Bank of America. But what about you?" Franz had just come over from England, and he had very, very little money as the Nazis had taken everything from them, as they did with any Jewish firm.

Franz Sichel knew Samuel Bronfman, the founder and head of Seagram's, quite well. He had met Mr. Sam and his wife some years back in Berlin and had a very friendly relationship with them. He introduced me and we sat down with Mr. Sam, as he was known. He said to us, "I will buy the majority of your firm for cash and you will have access to all the money you need, under one condition, that you and Franz remain partners with Seagram." I said, "I

would not have it done any other way. I have never been just an employee, I have always been a business owner. I have a great stake in the development of this business." He said, "That's fine."

So, arrangements were made and Seagram's bought seventy percent of the stock of Picker-Linz Importers, Inc., and we changed the name to Fromm and Sichel, Inc. I could not have handled the many problems and anxieties during these trying times without the support and help of my wife.

Franz was much older than I, about ten or twelve years. I said, "Franz, you become the president," as titles never meant anything to me. I became the executive vice president, and then some years later president and chief executive officer, and chairman of the board after Franz's death.

So, I went to the Bank of America and saw my friend and top executive, Mr. Fred Ferrogiaro, who was the head of the world-wide loan department. At that time, the bank was not as big as it was later on. I always could see him at eight o'clock in the morning to talk to him before nine o'clock, when the bank officially opened. I said, "Mr. Ferrogiaro, I need about three hundred thousand dollars. I will put in two hundred thousand of my own, but this is as much as I want to invest because if something should happen to me, I don't want my family to be without funds." He said that was all right, that was good. So I asked him, "What is the interest rate? Mr. Ferrogiaro, I am really looking for a good interest rate, because you know, I'm going to pay." Well, he laughed and said, "How about two percent?"

Dorfman: That was 1942?

Fromm: Yes, 1942. I said, "That's a little high." And so we argued back and forth. And we finally arrived at one and three-quarter percent. He said to me, "You know, Alfred, why I will give you that rate? Because people who are so insistent on a low interest rate are the ones who will pay. The ones who don't pay are the ones who don't care." He said, "This will go on a six month note and it will be renewed when it comes due." "No," I said, "I can't borrow money on that basis. I need a firm, three-year commitment of the bank to sleep peacefully. Then I can pay it off in three years."

Well, he finally agreed to that too--by that time, the firm had a good name, the Christian Brothers had a good name, and I had been in California for a few years and had done business with the bank personally. So they knew me quite well and we finally arranged that it would be a three year credit, at one and three-fourth percent. The prime rate at that time was one and one-half percent.

After one and a half years, I paid my loan off, because we made very good money in those years and we lived very frugally. Franz Sichel didn't have the funds available at that time, but he had them in later years when his family received restitution from the German government. He needed at least the same amount of credit that I had. He went to Sam Bronfman for help. Sam said, "I will guarantee the credit. So you can get what you need." This was also paid off in one and a half years. It really was the Seagram's guarantee that made it possible for Franz to join me as a partner. We paid off all the old partners, and the firm was then transferred a few years later to San Francisco.

A rapid development followed. We became one of the largest and most prosperous firms in the quality wine industry. During the difficulties in my firm, I got an offer from younger brother Paul in Chicago who had a small import business. He said, "You can come to Chicago and join me as a partner anytime you want." I said, "Paul, this is not what I want, I want to stay in California. And, in addition, you have other interests and are satisfied with a small and prosperous business, but I would be satisfied only with a large and prosperous business." But I never forgot it. As I mentioned before, my brother Paul had quite some influence on my life, and I believe that I was an influence on his, as we were very close.

Dorfman: What happened to Dave Boley and the other partners?

Fromm: Well, David Boley became ill and died a few years later, and no one ever heard his name again. The others invested their money, but if they had remained with the firm, they would have become millionaires. Boley had poisoned the minds of the others. Never have I met a man in my life like him.

You can see the intimate relationship that existed between us and Samuel Bronfman. Our firm had become a very profitable investment for Seagram--many, many times over what they had invested. When the business was sold back to the Christian Brothers, it was a very strong and prosperous firm. During our long partnership, we never asked Seagram for any help. Whenever we had a problem, we told them what the problem was and what we wanted to do about it. So it was a very fine relationship that we had with Mr. Sam and, later, with his sons, Edgar in New York, Charles in Montreal, and their top executives.

Lengthy Partnership with Franz Sichel

Dorfman: You were planning to discuss your relationship with your partner, Franz Sichel.

Fromm: Franz and I got along marvelously. We were partners for almost twenty-five years, until he died. We never had a cross word--I loved him like a brother. Franz was a very fine man, with a very good background in the wine business. A very decent and experienced business man with a very gentlemanly way about him. We understood each other very well. As I lived in California, we talked on the telephone every Sunday for about an hour or an hour and a half about whatever was going on. It was a happy relationship with mutual trust. I was able to develop some good executives who had their share in the progress of the firm.

I negotiated the contract with the Christian Brothers for an extension of the time that we would be their world-wide distributor. The large development--the increase in the size of the firm and the profits--really came after the firm was transferred to San Francisco, because the wine industry in California became important and we took our share of it.

Dorfman: I see. That is certainly very interesting. Have you been in contact with Franz Sichel's family since his death?

Fromm: Yes. Some of his cousins are good friends of mine. Franz got married late in life. He was in his middle sixties. Sylvia, his wife, was an actress whom he knew from Berlin. I now have very little contact with her.

I encouraged Franz to form the Franz W. Sichel Foundation in New York. While he was still alive, Franz and I owned some very valuable real estate together in California. I had asked him to join me, as I felt that if you are going to be in a partnership, you should do this all the time. This became very valuable land in the Silicon Valley in the San Jose area. Franz put all of this land in the Franz Sichel Foundation so that it was out of his estate. A lot of good has been done through the Franz Sichel Foundation. It started with a valuable collection of old wine glasses, and Franz was very well advised by some experts. These wine glasses were displayed for ten years at the Wine Museum of San Francisco. They are now housed in a special room, the Franz W. Sichel Room in the de Young Museum in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco.

As you know, I was always very closely connected with St. Mary's College of the Christian Brothers, and arranged for the Franz W. Sichel Foundation to put half a million dollars into a biology building that carries Franz's name. I was president of

Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Fromm and Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco Director Ian McKibbin White toast the inauguration of the long-term loan of the Franz W. Sichel Collection of drinking vessels.

Photograph by Triptych

Left to Right: Franz W. Sichel; Brother Gregory, President Mont La Salle Vineyards; Reverend Brother Charles Henry, Superior General of Christian Brothers; Alfred Fromm. 1967.

Fromm: the foundation after Franz's death for ten or twelve years and believe that the funds were distributed to a number of good causes.

Dorfman: The impact of this experience in 1942 on your business career is very clear.

[Interview 6: January 31, 1986]##

Changes

Dorfman: I'd like to go on to ask what is the most important change that you have seen in business since, let us say, the twenties or the thirties?

Fromm: I think the most important part is that the California Wine Industry, that hardly existed when Prohibition was repealed on December 5, 1933, has developed into a very large industry that has really gained world class. There is a small group of top wineries called "boutique wineries" that make outstanding products that compare with almost the best made in Europe.

The second important development was that America was not a wine-drinking country at all, because there were fourteen years of Prohibition. People drank hard liquor, they liked to get drunk, and today you have a great acceptance of wine as a social drink, and quite a few people who are very knowledgeable about wine or like to learn about wine. So American has actually become a wine-drinking country. It is in no way comparable to France and Italy, but wine has been there forever. So, this is a new thing, but in America if there is something that is good, then it is embraced by many people, and it can become an important industry as the California Wine Industry did. That was really the main development.

The Future

Dorfman: What do you look forward to for the wine business?

Fromm: The wine business presently has quite some difficulties, like the wine businesses all over the world, because of overproduction, and there is a tremendous amount of competition. When I first came to this country, I think there were twenty-one wineries after Prohibition was repealed. Today you have 650 wineries. There will be a sifting out. And then of course there's the fact that large whiskey distillers and other giant American firms went into the wine business too, like Seagram's and Coca-Cola, Reynolds Tobacco Company and others. There was no capital in the American wine industry when we started, because it was entirely new and few people had any money in those days anyway. But today it's a big-money industry and very large amounts have been invested in vineyards and in wineries, including substantial amounts by European and Asian firms.

Dorfman: So you think that there will be a sifting-out, which would reduce the number of companies involved?

Fromm: Yes, or consolidations, but the present situation is unsatisfactory all over the world.

Dorfman: Do you foresee other large changes in the industry in the future?

Fromm: Well, I don't think so for the foreseeable future. The problem with the wine industry is that we have to get more people to drink wine, because there are many millions of people in America who can well afford it. And wine is reasonable in price. This means that there will be campaigns in the promotion of wine, in popularizing wine so that the average person, instead of drinking hard liquor or beer might once in a while drink a good glass of wine. If people in America only for Easter, for Thanksgiving and for Christmas, would buy one or two bottles of wine, the business would be double what it is today. So we may have a long way to go, but it's a young business. The consumption of hard liquor has declined in the last few years, which gives the wine business an additional chance.

Dorfman: What role do you think the new products will play, such as the coolers?

Fromm: Our main thrust is to have people consume wine with meals, with food. It's the way wine can be enjoyed most and it's a good way. It doesn't increase drunkenness, just the contrary, there are very well-known health effects for consuming wine in moderation.

The coolers have become very important. They are low in alcohol because they contain no more than half wine, the rest is fruit juice with sparkling water. I believe they have seen their best days, and consumption of coolers will decline.

Recognition of Social Change by Business

Dorfman: Well, we've talked about what you foresee and what you have seen as changes in the wine industry over many years. What do you think the most significant social changes have been, in general, in this country?

Fromm: Today I think there is much greater social recognition by business than there was when I first came over in 1933. In those days, there were some large firms that controlled a great deal of the business life. And they really didn't care very much about their employees. With the inauguration of Social Security and of health insurance, it is today a different way than it was in those days. At that time, there were millions of people out of work and no help for them. When I arrived in 1933, the Depression was still on. The safety of the people today is very much greater than it was in former years. I think it is recognized more and more by even the most ardent conservatives today that those people have a voice and they have a vote. So I would say that in this respect, conditions in the United States are much better for the average man than they ever were.

Of course, there are great problems today with our large budget deficits and our very large deficit in the trade balance of the country, and the enormous amounts that the government expends on armament.

Hopefully, we will come to some sort of an understanding with the Soviets, because I think the main problem today in the world economy is the distrust that we have against the Russians and they have against us. If it ever would come to some understanding, it would help both countries immensely. I think you would see a development of the economies that nobody can even think of today. With the great danger of nuclear war, and particularly with nuclear weapons in the hands of some irresponsible people, like the Libyans and others, if America and the Soviet Union could come to some understanding, I think you would see a golden age.

Dorfman: What do you think is the likelihood of that?

Fromm: Over the long run, I think it has to happen or the world will go up in flames. And there will be no victor.

Expertise

Dorfman: You have worked with many organizations over a long period of time. What special skill do you offer?

Fromm: Well, I have some organizational experience and common sense. I have helped in fund-raising in addition to our giving substantial amounts over the years. As a head of a business for so many years I think I have the capacity to get the facts together under one umbrella. This is very important when you're head of an organization--I always felt in business, too--the most important part that I had to play was to get the total concept of what was going on and not get lost in all the details and individual knowledge of certain problems. Because you can find people for that, but there are not enough people who see the whole picture.

I always considered that was my main role. And to show the people who worked with me that I could do it, and therefore they could do it. It's very easy to tell other people to do something, and they don't respect you if they can say, "Well, the guy is just talking." I always have tried to show that it can be done, if it was in sales or in any other matters. That worked out quite well for the firm and for me personally.

Dorfman: What business plans do you have for the future?

Fromm: Well, I have no particular plans. Of course, I'm running my own affairs. You could say of the investments that we have to make, the greatest threat is inflation. You don't know when it will break out again. I believe it will. I really have no particular business ambitions any more, because I would like to use the time that's still given to me to assist the San Francisco Jewish Community Museum, the Fromm Institute for Lifelong Learning, and some other organizations that I'm connected with. I think I can make some more contributions there, and this is something which would be very close to my heart. I'm not in business any more to make any more money, because money just has a limited value. I have talked to many people during my life, and they often said, "If I only had a little money I would be happy." They do not understand what money cannot do.

Dorfman: What are the other organizations that you referred to just now, in addition to the Fromm Institute and the Jewish museum?

Fromm: There is the Wine Marketing Center at the University of San Francisco, and the other charitable enterprises in which I'm active. I really hope that in the coming years I can do some good.

On Contributions of Women

Dorfman: You've related with a great many women in your business and community careers who have made special contributions. Is there one, or several, in particular whose contributions are marked enough for you to mention?

Fromm: There are in almost any organization some outstanding women who make great contributions. In addition to that, voluntary work that is done by women is invaluable, because most organizations couldn't afford to do it any other way. I have met over the years a number of people for whom I have the highest respect, and I feel that they have done a lot of good, and are a good example for men and women.

Dorfman: Now, Mrs. Fromm has been very active, and has done much important work. What is her strongest and most important contribution?

Fromm: She is the Executive Director of the Fromm Institute for Lifelong Learning at the University of San Francisco, and she has headed it since its founding which was eleven years ago. She spends a few days every week at the Institute, and the development of the institute to the leading one of its kind in the USA has been to a good part her devotion and work.

Dorfman: What particular qualities and attributes does Mrs. Fromm bring to that role?

Fromm: She is intelligent, she knows what can and cannot be done. She has a good way of having other people work with her, because she is not bossy. She listens. And, she generally has very good relationships with the people who work with and under her.

Preparation for Successful Volunteerism

Dorfman: Again, in view of what you have learned, suppose a successful young man or woman was interested in making a civic contribution and came to you. How would you advise that person to prepare himself?

Fromm: That person should check out very carefully what he or she wants to do, and would have to be aware that making a contribution is not only a financial matter, but a matter of giving of yourself. You have to take this person's interest into account. He or she will prepare to do a lot of work, because on any board I have been connected with most of the directors and trustees really are there to give money, or to lend a well-known name. They really are not active. The active work is done by a few persons only. This is a very unfortunate situation. I have seen it in every organization in which I have been connected.

Dorfman: How have you surmounted that problem over the years?

Fromm: In the organizations I was closely connected with, we always had a small group of experienced people who worked. We got together, came to conclusions, and submitted them to the board. I don't think that I ever remember our suggestions being turned down, because the people were happy to have a few people who did the work.

Dorfman: What kind of an education would you suggest that the young person, to whom I referred might obtain to prepare himself?

Fromm: Well, as you know, I have no particular education, except for what I have learned throughout my life. I've worked since I was fifteen years old, and I never found this any handicap. A college education is certainly of value, but a graduate might have some pieces of knowledge, but without a real connecting knowledge which I think is the most important part. There are many people who understand details, and can always add needed information. I think a college education and work on the outside are important, because you cannot do anything for others if you do not have the experience on your own. I have seen the children of some very wealthy people do some very marvelous things, and I have seen very many who haven't done anything. They just luxuriated in the money that they inherited. For those people, I don't have any particular respect.

I think it is important if someone is able to make a contribution, that he or she have some really good personal experience. This means selling, administration--because in the end, whatever you do, it always involves some selling.

Dorfman: And so some experience and broadening.

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How do you suggest that this young person might begin?

Fromm: Well, it depends on what he or she likes to do. You cannot be successful in your own affairs and the affairs of others if you do not have a full commitment. And you can only make a commitment to something that you are involved in and that you really want to do. I think you do it because you feel you must and to maintain your self-respect. If you do anything for publicity, I always tell people, "Don't do it."

Dorfman: Why not?

Fromm: Because there is no commitment in it.

Dorfman: How would our young person, then, choose the right kind of civic work? How could he find the work he's best at, and enjoys the most?

Fromm: Well, it depends on the inclinations of the person. There are people who like to deal with young people; there certainly is a lot to be done. There is a lot to be done for old people, in which my wife and I are particularly involved. There is a drug problem, a crime problem--there are nothing but problems, actually. So whatever a person feels might particularly interest them, I think then they should look to what kind of an organization is engaged in that, and determine if that is an organization where he or she wants to work. Many of these organizations are ossified, and are run by people who are a little bit too old. I shouldn't say that, because I will be 82 years old next month, but I don't feel that old!

Dorfman: How might this man or woman set up his or her own professional life to allow time for civic work?

Fromm: If you really want to do it, you have time. In the first few years when you are establishing yourself, and I can speak here for myself, you don't have the time to do anything for other people. Particularly when you come over as an immigrant without money, and have to learn the language, and find the different ways of doing business here in America as compared to Europe. But after you are established, to some extent, you just have to make the time. Doing things for some of these organizations has meant a lot of work for me in the evenings. I just did not have the time during the day. That gave me some time to devote to other matters.

Dorfman: Sounds as if you took on another job.

Fromm: Yes, it is in some ways, I guess. You should not join an organization unless you are willing to do some actual work and take an interest. So it has to be something that interests the person.

Dorfman: And what are the greatest rewards that this young person might look forward to?

Fromm: To me the greatest reward is that I have fulfilled something about which I feel very strongly. It is necessary when you come over here as an immigrant, that you have to contribute something to the country that gives you a home and a chance. Also to maintain your self-respect. Because as I have said to you before, I don't think I deserve any credit for what I have done. I only did what I felt I had to do, and because I felt an obligation not only to this country but to myself and to my family.

Dorfman: And the disappointments?

Fromm: In whatever you do, there are always disappointments. There are people who promise a lot and don't do anything, this is a disappointment. There are people whom you trust, and find out

Fromm: maybe you shouldn't have trusted them. It's often a disappointment that things do not go as fast as young people particularly think they should go. It takes a certain amount of patience and determination, and realization that to do something right might take time.

XIII PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY

Dorfman: In the years to come, what would you like the record to reflect about you?

Fromm: I'd like to continue what I'm doing now, as long as I am able. When the time comes that I am no longer alive, my wife and I have made substantial provisions for what we leave behind us in earthly goods. This will go into the Alfred and Hanna Fromm Fund that we founded many years ago to continue what she and I have been connected with and feel very strongly about.

Dorfman: What is it that you feel that you will leave behind in a non-material way?

Fromm: I hope and I think that I can leave behind me the people who have respected me. To me this is the first consideration if you deal with people, that you gain their trust and respect. Out of this very often comes liking. But if someone just likes you and doesn't respect you, you've got nothing.

We hope to leave a family and group of friends behind who keep us in good memory.

Dorfman: And in a more personal vein, and part of this you touched upon, what are your expectations of your grandchildren?

Fromm: Whatever they do, I hope they will do well, and understand that in today's life, one does not do things one hundred percent for oneself. One has to consider how it affects other people, and should continue to contribute not only through their work, but also in other ways that can be helpful to people.

Dorfman: And what else would you add, before we close?

Fromm: You don't know how life will develop. So far our grandchildren are honest, they are straightforward, they are excellent students, they are good sportsmen, they are doing exceedingly well in college--so we have the hope that they will amount to something--

Fromm: even though there is no guarantee. The parents of our grandchildren are good and committed people. There is much love in our family and we hope it will guide our grandchildren in their lives.

Dorfman: Well, with their fine background—

Fromm: I have seen children from people with very good backgrounds who unfortunately did not turn out. All we hope and pray is that our grandchildren will do well.

Dorfman: Thank you so much for your time and the valuable historical information.

Fromm: I want to thank you for your patience.

ABOVE: Back, kneeling: Marc Fromm. Seated: Kathleen, David, and Kenneth Fromm. Front: Barbara Fromm.
BELOW: Rabbi and Mrs. Brian Lurie (Caroline Fromm), 1986.

Concluding Thoughts After Last Interview

January 27, 1988

To: Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library
University of California

I suggest for the end of my interview the following:

I am obliged to Mrs. Dorfman for her patience. Some of the matters discussed I felt were of scant interest; however, Mrs. Dorfman believes that they should be part of the interview to round out the picture of one's personality.

Life has been good to me. I married a beautiful woman who has been a good wife and an intelligent adviser, who helped me tremendously in reaching certain goals I had set for myself. We have loving, good children, who have made a success of their lives and have married spouses who are a full part of our family.

Our son David's wife Barbara is a sterling woman, intelligent, kind, and modest, who has brought up three fine children.

Our daughter Caroline is married to Rabbi Brian Lurie. Like many fathers I felt that there is no man good enough to marry our daughter. I have completely relented because Brian is a very fine and highly intelligent person and one of the important young Jewish leaders in this country. Our daughter Caroline has brought sunshine into my life since she was a little girl; she and Brian have two lovely children--a boy three-and-a-half years old and a girl six months old.

David is an outstanding surgeon with an illustrious career. He was for some years professor at Harvard University Medical School, and was appointed chief of surgery at New York State University at their medical campus in Syracuse, N.Y. for eight years. He was selected in January 1988 as chief of surgery and professor at Wayne State University in Detroit, a very big job in his field. He is in charge of surgery for four hospitals, heading up a staff of 42 professors.

(continued)

January 27, 1988

To: Regional Oral History Office
page 2

Based on my life experience, I would like my grandchildren to know some of the experiences that have shaped my life. Most important in whatever one does is a strong sense of integrity in order to retain one's self-worth and self-respect. In one's professional life, one should be guided by enlightened self-interest and strive for excellence. This makes it possible to help others who are less fortunate. I consider it an obligation for the gifted and intelligent to make their contribution to the community.

I would like to advise the young people who will come after me not to do anything for credit's sake or out of vanity. The reward is in one's own satisfaction. While I do not want to sermonize, I hope that our children and grandchildren will think of Ma and me that we have tried in life to do right and that we loved our children and grandchildren dearly.

Alfred Fromm

INTERVIEW WITH HANNA GRUENBAUM FROMM

FROMM, HANNA, educational administrator; b. Nuremberg, W.Ger., Dec. 20, 1913; d. David and Meta (Stiebel) Gruenbaum; m. Alfred Fromm, July 4, 1936; children—David, Caroline Fromm Lurie. Grad. in choreography and music Folkwang Sch. Dancing and Music, Essen, Gemany, 1934; D.Pub. Service (hon.), U. San Francisco, 1979. Served with ARC, World War II; exec. dir. Fromm Inst. Lifelong Learning, U. San Francisco, 1975—. Co-founder Music in the Vineyards, Saratoga, Calif.; bd. dirs. Amnesty Internat., Nat. Council of Fine Arts Museums; former bd. dirs. Young Audiences, Community Music Ctr., Legal Aid to Elderly, San Francisco Chamber Music Soc.; coordinating com. geriatric curriculum and program U. Calif.-San Francisco; dir. Nat. Council on Aging. Mem. Gerontology Soc. Am., Psychoanalytic Inst. of San Francisco Jewish. Club: Met. (San Francisco). Home: 850 El Camino del Mar San Francisco CA 94121 Office: 538 University Center 2130 Fulton St San Francisco CA 94117

From Who's Who in the West

21st Edition

XIV HANNA GRUENBAUM FROMM

[Interview with Hanna Fromm: December 23, 1985]##

Childhood in Germany

Dorfman: Would you tell me about the world of your childhood?

H. Fromm: We lived in Nuremberg, one of the largest cities in Bavaria. I had a wonderful, secure childhood. I was born after my parents were married for ten years. They were first cousins, and I think they were reluctant to have children. I come from a very large family. My father had nine brothers and sisters, and my mother had five brothers and sisters, so there were lots of cousins, and lots of company. My parents were very cultured and lots of artists, writers, and musicians came to our home. My father was also a good violinist with his own quartet. World War I broke out when I was born. My father served in the Germany army as a physician for four years.

Religion in the Family

Dorfman: Would you discuss the extent of religion in your childhood?

H. Fromm: My grandparents were very Orthodox, and my parents kept a kosher household in deference to their parents. So I grew up in this atmosphere. In those days, you tried to do what the grandparents wanted you to do.

I wasn't allowed to carry things on Saturday. I did at times, but my grandmother saw me once, when I stuffed a book under my coat, and all she said, "I think you gained a little weight." She was a wise woman. They wouldn't turn on electric lights, on Saturdays. They were really, really very Orthodox, and also very charitable. My grandfather was a prominent businessman in the gold leaf business and highly regarded in the Jewish community. He was very Orthodox.

H. Fromm: Half of my family is very religious, the ones now living in Israel still are.

Dorfman: Did you attend services as a child, you and your parents as well?

H. Fromm: I remember that I did only on High Holidays. I had private lessons in, I think it was the Chumesh. [The five books of Moses] I really don't remember, because I resented it so much. Every time I asked a question, "Why?", this teacher would say, "You're not to ask why, you're simply to believe and to do."

Dorfman: That must have been difficult for you.

H. Fromm: [laughs] It was. I always asked why, and never got an answer, and that didn't please me--just to blindly obey laws.

Dorfman: Did you have mostly Jewish friends as a child?

H. Fromm: Yes. I really didn't have any non-Jewish friends.

Dorfman: The area in which you lived, was that primarily peopled by Jewish families?

Every Friday evening we went to my grandparents' for dinner--and there were twenty-five, thirty people. Since I was an only child and a late comer, I was very spoiled. Very spoiled and very loved; I had a wonderful childhood.

The only bad memory I have is walking to school with my best friend and there were always kids who yelled to us, "Jew! Jew! Hep, hep, hep! Pork is fat, fat, fat! Jew, stinking Jew!" This was the fear of my life.

Dorfman: How old were you when this happened?

H. Fromm: Oh, school age; six, eight, nine.

Dorfman: How frightening.

H. Fromm: It was. I mean, anti-Semitism of this kind was rampant even then, particularly with the lower-class people.

Impact of Father's Death

H. Fromm: It was 1923, or before. Otherwise, I had a wonderful childhood, until my father, who was a very busy and famous gynecologist and surgeon, died within four days of pneumonia, when I was fourteen. He had been a leader in the Jewish community and as a doctor had

H. Fromm: been consulted from far and wide. And then my world fell to pieces. He asked me to come into his room just before he died, and told me he was dying.

He said goodbye, and said I have to take care of my mother. From then on, things were rather difficult.

Dorfman: One can imagine.

H. Fromm: He wanted me to be a physician, and he trained me at an early age. He taught me about anatomy, and how to use the microscope, and what to look for. I wanted to be a physician, but after he died, the will was gone. My mother had fallen to pieces, and my grades weren't all that good after that.

I went to dancing school during my school years, and my dancing teacher said I should become a choreographer. I loved choreography because it was something very vital and very creative. I studied, after graduating, at the famous Laban School of Dance and Music in Essen, now part of the University of Essen.

Dorfman: Essen?

H. Fromm: Essen, a medium-sized city close to Cologne, which is now the University of Essen. It was the Folkwang Institute at that time. My teacher was a very famous man who later on moved to London. His name was Kurt Joos. I studied there for two years and got my degree. He created some very famous dances, which are still danced now.

Dorfman: What might they be?

H. Fromm: One was "The Green Table," which--I helped to create. And "The Waltz." They are still in the repetoire of some companies like the Joffrey Ballet and when they come here, I'll go and I get nostalgic.

Dorfman: Of course, you must.

XV LEAVING GERMANY FOR ENGLAND AND PARIS, 1932

H. Fromm: After getting my degree, I went to England.

Dorfman: About what year?

H. Fromm: In '32, to study English. When Hitler came, my relatives in London said, "Why don't you stay here, it'll blow over soon." I stayed on, and studied English. Then, I had to go back to Germany and pick up my degree in person in Essen. Faculty and M. Laban said I should go to Paris together with another girl and open a dancing school sponsored by them, which was the craziest and most naive suggestion.

Life and Work in Paris

H. Fromm: We were eighteen years old; we didn't speak but school French; we had no money and did not know anyone. [laughs] Two eighteen year old girls going to Paris. I mean, it was lots of fun, but of course we couldn't open a school. We lived in an awfully run-down hotel, as all my friends did, and thought it was very romantic. Only when our mothers came, they saw how we lived, they all cried. [chuckles]

The view was of another wall, and I remember the window was patched with flypaper. Coming from a well-to-do home, where we had two maids, my mother and I--one for her, one for me--who carried my skis to the train at 5 a.m. when I went skiing with my friends--our life in Paris was quite a switch.

But I thought it was just wonderful, because we all had a feeling, "We don't have to live this way forever." Something will come up and we didn't want to go back to Germany, and I would have settled in England instead. We always had that hope, and when you're young, joint misery does not affect you all that much.

H. Fromm: We had a mentor, an older man, a friend of the family who was forty years old, who lent us money, or bought us food, and listened to our problems. There was a whole group from Nuremberg, where I was born. This friend knew a man who was a very good dress designer, who looked for a model. I was very thin, very tall for that time. So I went there; I had never seen a model in my life.

The designer was a short man originally from Poland, Jewish. He put on a black velvet coat with a huge white fur, and it was so long that it was like a train, and he walked around in this. I practically cracked up with laughter.

Dorfman: Hand upon his hips?

H. Fromm: Yes, to show me how to model. Which I did for a week only, because models were often harassed by male buyers. My boss said, "This is not a job for a Jewish girl. I want to groom you as my directrise." That means the head of his establishment.

But for that I had to learn how to sew in a sweatshop with one bulb. The room was about as big as this, [gestures to indicate a small area] and there were six of us there, sewing and cutting and ironing. The ironing was dreadful. The iron was put on a stove until it was red hot. Then you took a long rod with a hook at the end and put the iron in cold water which was in a tub on the floor. You had to be careful not to burn your hand, from the steam, which they warned me about, but I didn't understand it. My French was not good enough...the first thing I did was to burn my hand very badly.

I didn't like it there, but I learned a lot. I stayed there for nine months until I was undernourished and sick, because our group of friends spent little money on food. We walked around in the evenings with a bag of food and a baguette, and ate in each other's rooms. Not much to eat.

When some of our relatives came to Paris to invite us for dinner, most of us got sick. You know, we weren't used to eating good food anymore. When I became seriously undernourished—I wasn't too fat in the first place—my mother then sent me to England.

My father's three brothers and sister moved to England when they were very young. It's a long story, how my grandfather started a gold leaf business in London. And so I had a lot of English relatives, and cousins.

Dorfman: So that you did have an established family.

H. Fromm: Yes, I did, a big family. I left the atelier in Paris because the man wanted to marry me, and didn't leave me alone. Besides, I was vastly underpaid because I didn't have a work permit. And we couldn't get money from Germany anymore. So we had to live on what we made. My name then was Renee because it sounded better to my boss.

Dorfman: A difficult time financially.

H. Fromm: It was very difficult, but somehow, looking back, I don't remember it as a bad time. I remember it as a good, interesting time. The bad memories seem to disappear. In London, I learned dressmaking as a profession, which I disliked, but I had to learn from scratch again and got a degree in dressmaking and designing from Madame Katinka.

A Frightening Episode in Germany, 1933

Dorfman: [interruption in tape] You were going to tell me a story of how you had been rescued in Germany.

H. Fromm: Since I left in '32, I had to go back to Germany in 1933 to get my financial affairs in order. I inherited some money, and only could take five percent out of the country, which was very little. The Nazis did not permit Jews to take more than that out of Germany. And then I had to pick up my degree, in Essen. I then went to Frankfurt for two days to visit my relatives, and got caught in a rally, where Hitler spoke.

Dorfman: Horrible.

H. Fromm: I must have looked very frightened, and a man came to me, with the swastika armband, and I thought, "He's going to arrest me." He said to me, whispering, "I think you don't belong here. May I take you to wherever you want to go in my car?" And I did leave with him, I thought I had no choice. He asked, "Where do you live," and I gave him the name of a street corner near my relatives, but not the correct address.

He was a reporter, and he said to me, "I will give you one piece of advice. Leave Germany as quickly as possible, I will leave too. I'm not Jewish, but I can't stand this." I know he rescued me. He wrote me many letters afterwards, and he did leave Germany after a while.

Dorfman: Chilling story.

H. Fromm: It was. The two days, three days, that I was back in Germany, I could easily have been arrested there. I got so frightened when I heard Hitler talk, and it must have shown in my face, and this man came and led me away.

Dorfman: You did hear Hitler talking?

H. Fromm: Oh, yes, well, I heard him in Nuremberg, before. That's where it all started--it was an unforgettable experience to hear his hysterical voice and the people wildly responding. But this experience in Frankfurt was touch and go, because at that time already Jewish people were arrested off the street and put in a concentration camp. Picked up, just as he picked up me, while my rescuer had all the insignia, and the Nazi uniform--and he was not a Nazi--he just had to pretend because he was a reporter.

Dorfman: Which country did he go to?

H. Fromm: I think to England, but by that time I had left. He told me, "There will be a war, they're re-arming, and I urge you to leave as quickly as possibly." I left for England the next day. But I couldn't convince anybody else, in those days, to do the same.

Dorfman: And they remained, then.

H. Fromm: They remained until they had to flee, without anything, with nothing.

Engagement to Alfred Fromm

Dorfman: How did you meet Mr. Fromm? You said you became engaged....

H. Fromm: I met him because my aunt who was a widow with two children, and his father who was a widower with five children, got married when I was twelve years old. So, I knew him all my life, more or less.

Dorfman: This was while you were still in Germany.

H. Fromm: When I met him. Oh, yes, yes. I was only eleven years old and he was twenty. And then he came over to London in 1932 and proposed. He proposed when I was eighteen the first time, but I didn't want to know about it. It just frightened me--to get married. I was too young and immature.

I had the most romantic proposal the second time. We were in a rowboat on the River Thames in our bathing suits. My fiance said, "If you marry me, I must tell you we must move to America. We will be very poor in the beginning, we might have to live in

H. Fromm: the basement of an apartment house, and I may have at the start to sell newspapers." And after he said this, he dove into the water, and swam to shore, very fast.

I thought, "My God, what am I going to do, he's sorry." Then he swam leisurely back, and said, sheepishly, "I'm awfully sorry, but I took a laxative last night, and in the excitement, it just took effect." [chuckling]

Life and Work in Palestine, 1935

H. Fromm: My mother had emigrated to Palestine, to Jerusalem. I went there in 1935 to say goodbye to her. I was supposed to stay for four weeks, and get married in Jerusalem, but my fiance couldn't leave Germany.

There were lots of things wrong. His father was in a concentration camp for a few weeks, but he got out because they were important exporters of wine, and the Germans needed the money from foreign trade. I had to stay in Jerusalem for nine months and worked. A friend of mine bought a department store, and he needed a cashier. I told him, "I can't add," and he said, "But you don't steal." So, I said, "I'll work until my fiance comes," which took nine months instead of two weeks. My job was catastrophic, because I really can't add, you know; however, I learned.

Then I became chief cashier after several months with six cashiers working for me.

To me, it was a huge department store. I went back a few years ago, and it was actually a tiny little place. It was an interesting job. I spoke at that time, both Hebrew and Arabic, enough to get by.

Dorfman: Where did you learn Hebrew?

H. Fromm: I had to learn it as a child, the classic Hebrew. But then I took lessons in Hebrew and Arabic--Hebrew in Germany but Arabic in England.

Dorfman: But you did learn Hebrew at home?

H. Fromm: I did learn the classic Hebrew, in my private lessons in Germany. The Hebrew didn't do me much good in Palestine, because at that time only children learned and spoke Hebrew as I did. Old people spoke their native language, whatever that was. I asked an old man once, in my best Hebrew, what time it was, or where to go, and he said. "Why do you speak this language to me? I'm not a child."

Marriage in Trieste, Prague, and New York

H. Fromm: Then after waiting for nine months for my fiance, we couldn't get married as planned in Jerusalem. The English and the Arabs and the Jews were shooting at each other. I went to Trieste with my mother, and we were married there. We also got married in Prague a second time, and got married the third time in New York, because the first two weddings were only Jewish weddings, religious weddings; they weren't valid in New York and weren't recognized. One had to have a civil ceremony, a religious one was not mandatory.

Dorfman: That's what Mr. Fromm told me. What about the wedding in Prague? Why did that take place?

H. Fromm: Because my uncle, who was a professor there (he, and his wife, and my cousin died in a concentration camp later)--said the first ceremony in Trieste wasn't good enough, and he would give a big wedding, a big Orthodox wedding. We were married already six months, and we had to come in separate taxis to my uncle's house, because we weren't supposed to have seen each other before.

I got my aunt's wedding veil, and there was a chuppa, and a rabbi who talked for ever and ever and ever, and had halitosis. He put his hand in his pocket, took out a handkerchief and said to my husband, "Touch this handkerchief," which was sticking out of his pocket and enormously dirty. My husband did so reluctantly, but it was meant for good luck. After the ceremony was over, they led us to the bedroom for twenty minutes, left us alone, I guess to get acquainted. So that was the second wedding.

There was a big wedding feast, with all people unknown to us, who mostly spoke Czech.

After we arrived in New York, we found out that this second wedding wasn't legal either, and we went to New York City Hall and got married again. It's a pretty depressing thing to do in city hall. After standing in line, the clerk said in a bored voice, "Two dollars please. Swear it's true, and good luck." It was a good thing that we were married before. I had a checkered youth.

Dorfman: You certainly did!

H. Fromm: The interesting thing is that when we asked my daughter, in her rebellious years, "What would you like to do? What profession would you like to follow? Which college would you like to attend?" She said to me, "You were lucky, you didn't have a choice." I said, "You're right, but I would rather not have experienced that, because it wasn't easy. We just made the best of it."

H. Fromm: If one has too many choices and does not have a special skill or interest--young people become insecure. I mean, both have problems, but the non-choice, in a way, is easier, if you can survive it. Many of them didn't survive in Paris.

Dorfman: The agony of decision making.

H. Fromm: Unless you have a special gift for science or know what you want to do, really, it is difficult.

Dorfman: But you say that many people in Paris did not survive.

H. Fromm: No. Survive, I mean, they survived physically, but many were emotionally damaged. Yes, emotionally scarred. Altogether, it was a pretty grim time. Some of my friends went insane, and had to stay in the charity mental hospital. We visited them and there were fifty beds in a row, full of young people. It was a grim experience for a young girl, but still, we survived this, too.

Dorfman: Was it the dislocation?

H. Fromm: Yes. I didn't feel this as much because I lived in England before, and my family had managed to leave Germany, all but this one uncle and his family in Prague. So the rest of the family was spared those losses.

I had a very intimate relationship with my mother until her last breath. She was a wonderful woman and a wonderful grandmother and our children loved her dearly. My husband loved her and she was always an important part of our family. Mother had very good friends who admired her for her warmth, her kindness and her intelligence. She enjoyed greatly the success of our family and counseled many when they came to her for sound advice. She lived with us for a time, and all of us still miss her.

XVI ESSENTIAL VOLUNTEER WORK IN THE UNITED STATES, 1939-1945

Resettling Relatives Who Fled Germany

Dorfman: Who helped Jewish people who fled from Germany and came here?

H. Fromm: I guess organizations, and relatives, friends. Ourselves, we gave thirty-four affidavits, which means that you're responsible for the person, for, five years, until they become citizens. I remember when I was pregnant with my son in 1939, all I did was go to the ships in New York and call for relatives, and get them settled, find them housing, and explain the American way of life.

The first thing I did was take them to Woolworth's to get them a banana split ice cream. [laughter] You know, there was ice cream, and bananas, cherries, whipped cream, for fifteen cents. And they were so impressed.

Dorfman: You felt that this was typically American.

H. Fromm: That was typically American then, for me.

Dorfman: Yes.

H. Fromm: People said, "Why didn't you work," well, there was no chance. Every few weeks another relative came and had to be settled. They had children, and you had to see that they go to school, and—

Dorfman: Who funded those people, initially, for apartments, and--

H. Fromm: We did. We led a strange life. We lived in New York when we arrived, in a two room crummy furnished apartment, right off Lexington Avenue, with the El [elevated train] rattling the apartment, with southern exposure, and the sun beating down. Every month, we had to take customers out for elegant dinners, because my husband had to show that he had spent his expense funds. He sold German wines in those days and he had an expense account.

H. Fromm: We took my husband's customers to the Waldorf, which was the fanciest place to go to. We asked ten or twelve people, went dancing. I had wonderful clothes from Paris, I was better dressed than now, and afterwards we went back, like Cinderella, to our terrible little apartment. People always said, "Why don't you invite us to your home?" I didn't want to say, "We don't have a 'home,' really." They thought we were very rich young people.

We had little money, but were officially wealthy in a strange way, because I had, in my name, $80,000 in the bank which, however, wasn't ours. You know, people sent us, ten dollars, $100, $300, $500, $1000 to keep for them until they could come to the U.S. There were probably fifty or sixty accounts.

Dorfman: People from--

H. Fromm: From Germany--to keep for them, monies they managed to smuggle out. So we had ledgers, and books, and books of accounts. But it was $80,000, and when I went to the bank at the age of twenty-two, the bank manager, his name was Mr. Ghost, practically bowed down to the floor to cater to this rich young woman.

Dorfman: So confusing--

H. Fromm: It was, it was, but it was very strange, you know. Same thing as when we emigrated to the United States. We came on the German luxury liner. The trip was paid for in Germany, first class, we even had a suite. We had five hundred German marks board money for a five day trip. Which we tried to spend desperately, because we couldn't bring it to New York. We could take ten dollars with us. We called New York every day in order to spend the money, because unspent money went back to the German government.

We had champagne for lunch, which we didn't like. We bought things, like twelve silver lemon squeezers, when I couldn't even cook for one person. I mean, it was a crazy life. We could just pay the taxi. And I had my little inheritance.

Dorfman: Which you were able to take out with you.

H. Fromm: Yes, five percent of it, which didn't amount to very much, but it was enough to make us feel a little secure. And so our life went always from one extreme to another. Incredible.

Dorfman: An emotional yo-yo.

H. Fromm: Yes, but you get used to it. If you have a sense of humor, if you don't take yourself too seriously. I remember we thought we were very wealthy, we lived on fifteen dollars a week household money. Friends of mine had ten dollars a week.

Dorfman: The fifteen was—

H. Fromm: Enough.

Red Cross Driver and Instructor, World War II

Dorfman: Now, you also were a Red Cross driver.

H. Fromm: That was here in San Francisco, and a first aid instructor.

Dorfman: And when was that in San Francisco?

H. Fromm: Beginning of World War II. In 1942 I worked at the Red Cross, I took first aid instruction, then I became an instructor.

Dorfman: What were your duties as a Red Cross driver?

H. Fromm: To drive anybody who was assigned to us. Mainly pregnant women who were in labor, and either made it or didn't quite make it to the hospital. I delivered two babies. We had a course in obstetrics, because very often women, war brides, called us too late, to take them to the hospital. But we drove anybody.

Dorfman: You certainly had varied experiences.

H. Fromm: [laughs] I did. We drove people to the ships, when they had to go overseas, we had to take soldiers sightseeing, so they didn't go astray before being shipped out. These big buses up and down the hills. For them, it was a great experience that a lady would drive a bus.

Dorfman: You were driving buses as well, then, not just a station wagon.

H. Fromm: Double clutch buses, trucks, ambulances, anything.

Dorfman: Where did you learn to drive those vehicles?

H. Fromm: We had instructions. When I went there to introduce myself, they said, "Would you drive a truck to Mare Island, and get an anchor? It's an emergency." I had a suit on, and a little hat that looked like a pie shape, and a veil. And I had to drive a truck with double shift, which I had never done before, and I couldn't shift from first into second gear, so I drove in first gear to Mare Island, and arriving totally exhausted--the hat was by that time over one ear; disheveled and everybody laughed. I looked like a Helen Hokinson cartoon, if you remember--"A lady, working for the Red Cross." It was really hilarious.

H. Fromm: And I drove back in first gear, because I didn't know how to shift this thing without ruining the whole car. I had very varied experiences, I must say.

Dorfman: Much of that must have prepared you for the Fromm Institute for Lifelong Learning.

XVII FROMM INSTITUTE FOR LIFELONG LEARNING; DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

H. Fromm: Well, nothing prepared me for that. It took two years of preparation. The idea came to me when I was sick, with a bad stomach ulcer. I talked to a lot of people on the phone, and I found out how many retired people are bored and lonely and feel completely useless.

I started asking people, "Would you be interested in going to a university and being taught by retired professors," because the professors become just as lonely. Some people said, "Yes," some people said, "No." Some professors said, "Don't be stupid, who wants to teach after they are retired?" But most came back to us sometime after they were retired and asked to teach again.

Then my husband and I prepared for two years on how to go about it. I had a very good director, Millie Mishkin, who really was the driving force at the time. I mean, I didn't know much about universities or teaching.

Dorfman: What was her role?

H. Fromm: She was the program director, she was the doer, she was--

Dorfman: What had she done before?

H. Fromm: She had worked in adult education. Before, at the Steelworker's Union in Pittsburgh, and did many other things.

Dorfman: And how did the two of you--

H. Fromm: A friend of ours introduced us, and said, "She has just arrived here, and is married to Professor Mishkin, he teaches at the law school in Berkeley, and she would be the right person for you to start such a project." So we did plan. One day, our board of directors said, after two years, "You can plan for years, but there must be a time that you simply start and see how it goes. You might get no one, you might get thirty-five people." We had

H. Fromm: an academic search committee; President Romberg of San Francisco State University, and a professor from the University of San Francisco found us six retired professors.

We told them all, "You might not have any students. This is an experiment." There was one article in the paper about the start of this institute, and then six hundred people came, and wanted to enroll. There was a long line of older people. It was really scary.

Dorfman: Frightening.

H. Fromm: It was. And they pushed and they shoved, it was just incredible. We could accommodate seventy-six people. All the others were put on the waiting list. It was first come, first serve, and when they found out where to enroll, they really pushed so hard that some people became disgusted and simply left. And the women were more aggressive than the men.

Dorfman: Why do you suppose that?

H. Fromm: I don't know. It was astounding. One man came to us after we had enrolled as many as we could, a few days later, and said he saw the article in the paper, and we must take him. We said, "We can't, we're full." He started to cry, and he said, "I worked all my life, and I have five children, they all go to college. It's time that I get educated so that I can talk to them." We enrolled him. The desperation of people was something frightening.

Dorfman: Something meaningful.

H. Fromm: Something meaningful, something to do, to find friends, to find people who are in the same situation as they are. Which is one of the side benefits of the institute.

We have now a student association with three hundred students. Twenty of our students went to Europe on a trip. They went to Spain, to Italy, and to Morocco. They flew home from Rome, via New York, arrived here at three in the morning, the next morning they were back in class. One of them is eighty-four years old, and I said, "Don't you have jet lag?" She said, "Yes, but I can't miss any more classes."

Dorfman: What dedication.

H. Fromm: Unbelievable.

Dorfman: You must be offering something.

H. Fromm: We must. As I said, the time was right. We got into this project not expecting anything, and it just took off.

##

Dorfman: You were telling me last time we met about a man who came to you and told you that he had attempted to do the same sort of thing that you had--

H. Fromm: Five years before, at the same place. At USF, and he said no one was interested.

Dorfman: Why do you think--

H. Fromm: I don't know. Maybe the timing wasn't right, maybe he did something that wasn't--

Dorfman: What was this man?

H. Fromm: I don't know. I have no idea. I think aging came into its own within a short time. Attention was being paid to older people and retired people, also within a short time. Maybe our timing was right, or maybe our preparation was better; I don't know. With all the people who were around me that day, I couldn't talk to him. And I think that a strong sense of commitment to the project helped substantially.

Dorfman: Were there any models that you had for the Fromm Institute for Lifelong Learning in--people, or other institutions?

H. Fromm: The only one was Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco. Since my cousin, Peter K. Maier, professor of law, teaches at Hastings, I met quite a few professors there. That was the only model, really. But they have such fabulous retired law professors, that I thought, "Why can't we get some fabulous retired professors in other disciplines?"

Dorfman: And you did.

H. Fromm: And we did indeed. But I think my ignorance was a blessing. I was totally ignorant of rules and procedures. I simply wrote to professors I had met, or who were recommended to me. I wrote them letters to ask if they wanted to teach for us. That we do this and that, and would they be interested. Some were, some were not.

Dorfman: By and large--

H. Fromm: But by and large, as it is usually, the more famous or well known the person was, the nicer they were. Those not well known didn't even bother to write back. The others wrote back, or said, "I know another person who would possibly teach for you." So it progressed by word of mouth.

College for only the over-50

By Caroline Drewes

"WE HAD A FRIEND who retired. First, he went around the world. Then he took up golf. Then he simply got bored and died."

Starkly limned, that is when the idea resulting in the Fromm Institute for Lifelong Learning began to take shape more than two years ago, or as it is described by Hanna Fromm, cool and graceful and exquisitely groomed as always, relaxed on her cinnamon velvet sofa.

Alfred Fromm adds another case history of another friend, the retired president of a bank. "One day he was in the prime of life, ready to enjoy himself outside the working world he'd known for 40 years. The next time I saw him, he told me he has little to do and few people with whom he can exchange thoughts."

Hanna again: "I asked my husband, 'What would you do if you had to retire?' and he said 'I think I'd like to go back to school. But not with my grandchildren.' Not that his grandchildren are that old yet. Then I started asking the same question at cocktail parties and many people gave the same answer. A professor said he would rather teach older people."

For the next two years, the president of national wine distributors Fromm & Sichel and his wife — whose last project was the establishment of the Wine Museum near Fisherman's Wharf — researched the subject of adult education in the Bay Area, talking with older adults, gerontologists, government officials in Washington and other experts on aging.

"It sort of came to me," says Hanna in retrospect, "that this was something well worth doing."

Finally, they brought together nearly a dozen private funding sources, including their own.

This month the Fromms' idea becomes a reality. Registration in the Fromm Institute for Lifelong Learning at the University of San Francisco begins Feb. 16 with an open house; classes commence there on Feb. 23.

Limited to retired people over 50, the Institute offers courses covering serious disciplines which are taught during the day. Instructors, like students, have completed careers and are now in search of meaningful retirement through education. It is a "university within a university" on the USF campus, offering an atmosphere of peers in a traditional setting, with the privileges that go with it, but with its own board of directors.

Edith Fried is resident director of the Institute; Mildred Mishkin is planning director. A $100 annual tuition entitles students to take any or all of the 8-week course offerings, three times a year.

Among instructors are Stanford's Dr. George Sensabaugh; Dr. Robert D. Clark, former president of Oregon State College; and Dr. Robert Thornton, who studied with Albert Einstein while teaching at Brandeis.

Dark-haired Hanna Fromm, student of music, choreography, and art in her native Germany and of design in London and Paris, but never involved in a career other than marriage, believes compulsory retirement is "wrong," and as for the prospect of old age, "I hate it." Like everyone else. "But I'd rather be active than feeling sorry for myself." Among her volunteer activities, she is a director of the National Council on the Aging in Washington, D.C.

The Fromms, who first met when Hanna was 12 and her widowed aunt married Alfred's widowed father, came here in 1936. They settled in San Francisco because Alfred saw the future of the wine industry in the Napa region.

"We were married three times in three different countries," Hanna tells you. "Actually, we were supposed to be married in Jerusalem, where my mother was living. I went to stay with her a few weeks and then the Nazis wouldn't let Alfred leave Germany for 9 months." So for 9 months, Hanna worked as a cashier in a department store, speaking both Hebrew and Arabic.

By the time the couple was reunited, "there were riots in Palestine, shooting between the British and the Arabs and the Jews. We got married in Trieste instead. I had an uncle in Prague who thought that was not a real wedding. After a year and a half we had a very orthodox wedding in Prague. And when we arrived in the United States, we were told both weddings were not legal. So we were married again in city hall. We are well married." And Hanna smiles.

Certainly they are a good team. Educators, sociologists, and gerontologists are watching the pilot program at USF as the start of a trend toward full service education for the elderly.

"If it works as planned," say the Fromms, "many colleges and universities will probably implement similar programs.

"In this country we do so much for our young people, and very often they don't appreciate it. We offer the elderly arts and crafts, but nothing intellectually stimulating. We have a great natural resource in our old people."

San Francisco Sunday Examiner and Chronicl

February 8, 1976

H. Fromm: One professor whom I contacted was an economist, a very well known economist, who wrote back, "Your project is very interesting, but I will not teach economics any more, because economics cannot be taught. What you need is a referee. You get ten economists and ten opinions. Nobody can teach economics nowadays."

Dorfman: Interesting.

H. Fromm: Well, in a way, it was a bitter letter. But it was interesting. We got our professors together, and then from then on it just took off, and it was a lot of work.

Dorfman: I understand.

H. Fromm: After Mrs. Mishkin retired in 1982, we asked a retired professor to become the academic program director. By that time we also needed a professional person.

Dorfman: And who replaced Mrs. Mishkin?

H. Fromm: Professor John Dennis, who took early retirement from the San Francisco State University. He's very good. The institute blossomed. I wouldn't say prospered, because we always have to look for funds. And the more students we have, the more expenses increase.

Limitations

H. Fromm: We can't take any more students, for two reasons. One is because we don't have the money, and the university doesn't have the space.

Fund Raising

Dorfman: You previously mentioned that there was always a problem in terms of money, of fundraising. You also mentioned Mr. Fromm's unusual effectiveness.

H. Fromm: Yes.

Dorfman: What is his secret?

H. Fromm: He's a born salesman. He is committed and is convinced of his "product."

H. Fromm: I'm the opposite. I can't raise funds. I freeze up, I dry up, I'm embarrassed, and that's not a good way to do it. I only got money once, from a man who said to me, "What are you doing this damn fool thing for?" He was a very well known, very wealthy man, and I said to him--I was very angry--"You live in an ivory tower. You have your own plane, you have your house with a swimming pool, lots of servants, limousines, and you're sixty-seven years old, and you're still working. Have you ever followed up on people who retire? What becomes of them, what happens to them?"

He said, "Write it down for me." So I wrote him a letter, and I said, "I'm not asking for money, I just want to tell you what we're doing and why" He sent a very terse letter back, and said, "I'll give you $5000."

Dorfman: So you feel that Mr. Fromm's belief in what--

H. Fromm: He firmly believes in what he is doing, and he can convey this feeling.

Dorfman: That's a talent.

H. Fromm: It is a talent. It is something I can't do, which is very bad. We ourselves give a very substantial amount for the expenses of the institute.

Dorfman: In addition, you bring other very needed skills.

Skilled Listening

H. Fromm: I listen. We have students who come and say, "Oh, I see you're busy. I just want to talk to you," and then they tell me about their illnesses from age six months on. I figure out, "Now she's at the age of fifty, now it's maybe twenty-two years to go." [laughs] Sometimes they go back to the year '40. This woman talked to me for one hour. I had to write a letter, and I got a bit impatient. She said in the end, "I'm awfully sorry I took so much of your time, but you see, I live alone, and I have nobody to talk to," and then I felt terrible.

Or a woman writes to me and sends me fifty pages of what happened to her in Vienna, how she was raped, and what a terrible fate she had because she was half Jewish, and her Jewish relatives ostracized her for being non-Jewish. The others didn't pay attention to her because they thought she was Jewish. She had to move from place to place, and she has no money, and no friends. She's a very good writer, and she wrote a book.

H. Fromm: So I called her doctor, and I said, "I got permission to call you, I don't want to know what she has. But how can I help her?" He said, "Find her an apartment, preferably with Jewish people, have her book published, and see to it that she gets a word processor." I said, "We're not social workers, that's not our role. I'll try to help her," and I called various organizations. So these are the by-products.

Dorfman: Good listening is very powerful, isn't it?

H. Fromm: It is. It's very exhausting, too. Your heart breaks; you hear so many horrible stories.

More About Funding

Dorfman: Can you tell me who besides you and Mr. Fromm helped to fund the institute?

H. Fromm: We went to foundations. It was not hard to get seed money. The San Francisco Foundation gives you some seed money, but then they don't go on with it. You always have to find either new foundations, or new organizations, new corporations, or new individuals.

Dorfman: Were there individuals who--

H. Fromm: We started the Friends of the Fromm Institute. Some money came in, in twenty dollars, fifty dollars, $1000, but it is an enormous amount of work. We always had to have these fundraising dinners, which are a pain. You try not to bore people with lots of speeches. Finally we had an idea which is much copied now; to show contributors a video of what we are doing. Then we had students who spoke, and told what they get out of joining the institute. After that, we had professors who spoke, who told what they get out of teaching after retirement. Then we ran out of ideas, and I said, "Let's try a new thing, and not have a fundraising dinner."

So we sent out very attractive folders, telling people what we are doing, and asking would they help us. We actually got more money by not having a fundraising affair, because I think people have go to too many. And also, the cost of having a fundraising dinner is enormous.

Dorfman: It must be.

H. Fromm: So it's less work and less staffing. And we raised the same amount of money by a concentrated effort.

Dorfman: That's wonderful.

H. Fromm: But now this has been copied, too. I received a fundraising brochure the other day for a non-Ball.

Honorary Doctor of Public Service, University of San Francisco, May 1979

Dorfman: You were recognized for your work with the Fromm Institute by the University of San Francisco. Tell me in what way.

H. Fromm: I was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Public Service in May 1979. My husband received the same degree.

The Future

Dorfman: What do you see in the future for the Fromm Institute?

H. Fromm: There is such a tremendous need for an organization like ours, and I believe it will continue for a long time. We're trying now to plan for the next ten years.

Dorfman: And what are your plans for the next ten years?

H. Fromm: The main thing is funding, and making plans what we want the university to do and what they want us to do. And to find a person who will oversee this. We might not be alive in ten years, or probably not able to do it, I don't know. We are trying to get together with lawyers and the university.

Dorfman: Are there major issues for planning for the future?

H. Fromm: We would like it to go on that way. And who will take care of the money? We send the money to the university to pay our expenses. We invest the money, not they. Whatever the cash expenses, they are paid by us to the university who then disburses it.

Dorfman: So that the planning involves financial planning for the future--

H. Fromm: It's both. It's financial planning, it's academic planning, it's that people who will run the institute stick to our creed to only ask retired professors to teach. Because if you start with young professors, you are just inundated. We had an ad in the Journal of Higher Education when we started. We wrote that we are looking for retired professors; we got so many letters from young

PROGRAMS GROW

Elderly Find a New Life on Campus

BY WILLIAM ENDICOTT
Times Staff Writer

SAN FRANCISCO—Hannah Fromm watched a neighbor, "a once-powerful man, a banker," disintegrate.

"He retired and didn't know what to do with himself," she said. "I'd see him out walking his little dog or puttering in his yard. And then one day he died.

"I was convinced it was because he was totally bored."

So she and her husband, Alfred, a viticulturist, began asking friends what they would do when they retired and the answer they received most often was that the older people they knew would like to return to school "but not with their grandchildren."

And they wanted to learn something besides how to make table mats out of Popsicle sticks.

What their friends and others like them needed, the Fromms decided, was a setting where older people could enjoy a campus atmosphere but with classmates in their own age group and where they could take solid academic courses for pleasure, not for credit.

The result was the founding three years ago of the Fromm Institute for Lifelong Learning at the University of San Francisco, typical of a growing number of programs in higher education being developed at colleges and universities across the country exclusively for senior citizens.

Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, for example, has the Institute for Retirement Studies where men and women ages 50 and older can enroll in free, noncredit courses; Ohio State University and other schools offer a "Program 60" to allow persons 60 and older to take classes at no charge.

Fordham University in New York has a "College at 60" and Pace University in New York offers, for a small fee, a one-year membership in its "Active Retirement Center" and enrollment in special daytime courses. The New School for Social Research in New York has a special "institute for retired professionals."

More than 230 colleges and universities in 38 states participate in the National Elderhostel program, which gives the elderly a chance to live and learn on campuses during vacation periods when other students are away.

"Lots of people enjoy learning and want to learn," William Berkeley, the National Elderhostel president, said, "and it isn't just something that goes on for people under 21 or 22 years of age."

Indeed, the thrust of all the programs for older persons is that one is never too old to learn.

"We thought we'd be lucky to get 50 students when we first started," Hannah Fromm said, "and had planned for 35. We had 600 show up to register. It was pandemonium.

"The most we could accommodate was 76 and we had filled all the spots when one 60-year-old man came up to me with tears in his eyes. He said his wife was still working, his five kids were gone from home and he didn't know what to do with himself. We took him."

Although the University of San Francisco, a Jesuit school, provides office and classroom space, the institute depends almost entirely on private foundations and corporate donations for its $121,000 annual budget. Students, if they can afford it, pay $150 tuition for three eight-week terms and some make voluntary contributions above that amount.

"Money is our biggest problem," Mrs. Fromm said.

The University of San Francisco was chosen as the site for the institute, program director Mildred Mishkin said, because "they are small and have Jesuitical patience—and they wanted us."

Currently, 160 persons from ages 50 to 91 are enrolled in courses ranging from Greek mythology and genetics to foreign affairs and California history. All are taught by retired university professors living in the Bay Area who, like their students, have often found retirement difficult.

Among the faculty members are Charles Easton Rothwell, a former president of Mills College in Oakland and executive secretary of the United Nations Charter Conference here in 1945; Thomas Blaisdell, professor emeritus of political science at the University of California and a former official in the administrations of Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S Truman, and Ernest Mundt, professor emeritus of art at San Francisco State University.

"There is homogeneity of wisdom in the group," Robert Thornton, 81, a physics professor who once studied under Albert Einstein, told a reporter shortly after the institute opened in 1976. He added that he could teach more to the older students in a shorter period than he ever had been able to do with their younger counterparts.

To be sure, a study conducted at the Puget Sound Health Cooperative in Seattle found that a person's abilities do not necessarily decrease with time and, in fact, verbal-comprehension skills frequently increase as one grows older.

There is no reason, the study concluded, that older people cannot acquire new knowledge and

Some of the Fromm students have college degrees earned years ago; others have never been inside a college classroom. But they represent a cross-section of older adults in the Bay Area. A few have gone on to enroll in regular university courses in pursuit of a degree.

"I was so busy earning a living my whole life, I didn't have time for such things," the institute's student body president, 83-year-old Girvin Wait, said. "I think this is stupendous. And being around all the young people on campus just fascinates me tremendously."

Wait is a master mariner by trade and retired several years ago as a merchant captain after 50 years at sea with Matson and Pacific Far East Lines. He is now taking courses on such subjects as philosophy, foreign affairs and science and said he also "took a couple of astronomy courses just to bring myself up to date."

His wife of 56 years, Constance, probably will enroll in the institute next year, he said. "She's had such an active schedule, she's just been too busy this year," he said.

Margaret Sah, 65, a retired librarian, and her husband, Benn, 68, who retired three years ago as an engineer with Bechtel Corp., are taking music, political science and other subjects they never had a chance to study when they were preparing for their careers.

"I like the intellectual stimulus," she said. "This is more like a liberal arts college."

And James Schaefle, 73, has taken courses in English literature, astronomy, physics and cosmology, plus auditing regular university courses in anthropology and philosophy.

"My wife died of cancer three years ago and I was really in a low state of mind," he said. "A friend told me about the institute and I enrolled. I like it because it doesn't have the usual academic tensions."

A marine engineer before he retired in 1965, he also discovered that he and Wait had once served together on the same ship. "It was in 1932," he said. "But our paths were quite separate then. He was the captain and I was a wiper, the lowest rate in the engine room."

In addition to organizing their own "student government," the Fromm students regularly schedule brown-bag lunches featuring prominent speakers and field trips to such events as the Shakespeare Festival in Ashland, Ore.

"I feel like a schoolgirl again," Anne Davis, 66, a retired librarian, said. One of the institute's first students, Fred Ramstedt, said that at his age "learning has more meaning than it has purpose. My presence on this campus is simply telling the world, 'If you love learning, you love life.' "

Mrs. Fromm, who works without pay as the institute's executive director, said she had done nothing that would have prepared her for running such a program and, despite a lifelong interest in music, choreography and design, had never had a career other than marriage. "I'm the perfect example of teaching an old dog new tricks," she said.

But she is a director of the National Council on Aging in Washington and has strong opinions about the prospects of old age. "I hate it," she once was quoted saying. "But I'd rather be active than feeling sorry for myself."

Los Angeles Times, October 9, 1979

H. Fromm: professors who said, "To all intents and purposes, I'm retired because I lost my position, I didn't get tenure--" Once you start with this, you don't have any way to check them out.

And our students are more comfortable with people their own age. There are other places to go to for those who are not and who want to study with young people. They can also audit with young people at the University of San Francisco. They can be visitors, not auditors, because auditors pay, and visitors don't. But, on the whole, there are not too many who do this. They would rather study with their own age group, they love being taught by their own age group.

Because young professors also don't know how much older people know. So they start, as if they were undergraduates, and with information our students already know.

Dorfman: From experience.

H. Fromm: From experience. Yes, from life experience, from reading a lot. They know the basics.

XVIII MUSIC IN THE VINEYARDS

Dorfman: I'd like to move on now to your work with Music in the Vineyards. I believe that that came about because of the connection with your brother-in-law, Norman.

H. Fromm: Not really. It began because the Fellows of the Behavioral Sciences came to Saratoga, to meet each other there. It used to be called the Ford Foundation, now it's the Behavioral Sciences. Where professors go for a year of studies of their choice.

Dorfman: Yes, at Stanford.

H. Fromm: Yes. They came to the Paul Masson winery twice a year, when they joined the foundation, and when they left, because they had little contact with each other in that year, although they knew one another. So it was very interesting for us, and some of the fellows asked us if they could come up to the winery and play music.

Dorfman: What year was this?

H. Fromm: I would say about twenty years, twenty-two years ago, or more. We had this big terrace, and we had moonlight concerts and invited a few friends. It was wonderful, you know. And then everybody said, "Oh, we heard you had a concert, next time can we come, too?" So we invited about a hundred people. The road was so narrow that you could either drive up or you could drive down.

We had a hay wagon. We drove down to the parking space, and had all the guests come up in a hay wagon.

Dorfman: Oh, how exciting.

H. Fromm: And it was great fun. So, it started. And then somebody said, "You should do this professionally, it's so enjoyable."

Dorfman: And this was at Paul Masson Vineyard?

H. Fromm: Yes. We owned it at that time. I said, "It's a marvelous idea, but I don't know how to do it." So Norman, who was a great music lover and organizer, and I started it together. Then other people got involved. But that's how it started.

We had an acoustics expert to tell us where the best acoustics are and what we can do to improve it.

Dorfman: Who was that?

H. Fromm: Somebody from Stanford. We had the music performed in front of the church facade, which was actually the front of a wine cellar, but it was an old church facade. It was shipped from Spain and was brought to Saratoga stone by stone by Mr. Masson, and it is a beautiful old Romanesque church facade. That is where the concerts are. We also built bleachers to accommodate hundreds of guests.

Dorfman: So it's something that developed over a period of time.

H. Fromm: Yes, of course, it takes years to do that. And we found out for that if there is a wind, singers can't hear their own voices. We had to adjust for that. We found out that if we have a piano, the night before the concert it gets damp, or if there's a storm, that we had to get a piano tuner on Sunday morning.

Dorfman: How did you manage that?

H. Fromm: Just somehow managed. There were a lot of us who worked at that. Then we found out that people fainted, or people got hurt, so we had first aid stations. Because we had, in the end, eight hundred people. You learn by bitter experience at times. Later this increased to one thousand with the creation of some new parking space.

A woman fainted right in front of me, from the heat, and next to me was a surgeon and his wife. I said, "Do something!", and his wife said, "If he can't operate, he wouldn't know what to do." He didn't move a finger, and she came to by herself.

Dorfman: Fortunately. [laughter]

H. Fromm: I think somebody threw water on her or something. And some had heat prostration, and I bought a lot of salt tablets. Somebody gave us twenty pounds of salt, which I still have.

Dorfman: And for how long did the concerts continue?

H. Fromm: They're still continuing, but we are not involved anymore.

Dorfman: How long were you involved?

H. Fromm: Maybe ten, twelve years. And then the winery changed management and we stopped being involved.

Dorfman: The concerts continue under the auspices of the winery?

H. Fromm: Yes. As a matter of fact, they expanded it. They have jazz concerts, and they have rock and roll music--they do much more than we did; we just had classical music. I heard it's very successful.

Dorfman: But you haven't--

H. Fromm: I can't bring myself to go up and see our house and not be permitted to go in--all the things we built--and not feel a part of it; being a stranger there. Because we rebuilt the whole place ourselves with the help of winery workers. We rebuilt the house, we built the terrace, we built the pool, we built the bleachers, we built the whole thing, planted the trees--which are now all grown up. It bothers me to go up. Last time they wouldn't let me go into the house, and then I said, "That's the end."

Dorfman: That's understandable.

H. Fromm: Last time I was there was when my daughter was married at the winery, in front of the wishing well, and it was simply beautiful. Only the marriage didn't last.

Dorfman: That was too bad. What year was that?

H. Fromm: 1970, I think.

Dorfman: Are there other thoughts or memories that you have in connection with the Music in the Vineyards project?

Conductors and Artists; Friends and Guests

H. Fromm: No, just the enormous amount of work and satisfaction. Saying hello to eight hundred people whom you would meet in San Francisco, and they would say, "But I know you," and we didn't know them. Because to us it was a blur of faces. And the good times we had. Meeting interesting people, and all the musicians, who stayed in the house.

Dorfman: Who particularly comes to mind, who stayed with you as a guest?

H. Fromm: They all stayed with us. And I can't remember the names anymore.

Kurt Adler

Dorfman: The San Francisco Opera--you have known Kurt Adler.

H. Fromm: Kurt Herbert Adler; since he came here.

Dorfman: What year was that?

H. Fromm: I have to think back, because his wife was pregnant with his son. He must be forty years old, at least, I think.

Dorfman: What kind of a person was Kurt Adler?

H. Fromm: He's a very powerful person, he's very dogmatic, he's a good organizer. He's very charming when he wants to be, and he's very knowledgeable about opera, music, and what he's doing, or was doing. He's a very intelligent man. And difficult.

Dorfman: In what way?

H. Fromm: I mean, he's not difficult, socially. He was difficult at the opera, because he wanted to have things done the way he wanted to have them done, and it's difficult to deal with all the prima donnas. You know, who when somebody boos or somebody doesn't applaud enough, then they say, "I'm not going on for the next act."

But he did a marvelous job.

Dorfman: In what way did you and Mr. Fromm relate with Mr. Adler?

H. Fromm: We were friends. As a matter of fact, he got engaged at our house in Kentfield, to his second wife. At the pool, more or less. [chuckles] But, we were very good friends. I always gave a party after the opening of the opera for people he wanted to invite; fifty or sixty people for a sit down dinner. That was in our young years. I don't think I could do it anymore. We went to bed at six or seven o'clock in the morning. At times my husband said to the artists, "You can stay up, you can make your breakfast if you want to, but I'm going to bed." [laughs] So we had a very good time.

Dorfman: Yes, I imagine you did.

H. Fromm: Met all the well-known singers. Like Leontyne Price, and Joan Sutherland. But I stopped when, instead of fifty people, ninety came for dinner, without my knowledge, without asking if they could bring somebody. When somebody said, "Are you going to the Fromms for dinner," I was told that a singer said, "Oh, who are

H. Fromm: the Fromms?" "Oh, they are the people who have a house by the ocean where we get enough to eat, and don't have to stand in line."

Then I said, "That's it, finished."

Dorfman: That was it. Who was the most personable of all the artists?

H. Fromm: I would say Leontyne Price.

Dorfman: In what way?

H. Fromm: She was fun to be with, she was intelligent and warm; told us wonderful stories, jokes, and stories of her life. She and Regina Resnick; they always stayed for a long time, and we sat around and talked.

Dorfman: Did you talk about music?

H. Fromm: They don't want to talk about music. They don't want to listen to music, they don't want to hear music after they have sung in an opera.

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Dorfman: When we turned the tape, you were talking about your relationship with some of the opera artists and personalities who you had entertained in your home. You said that most of them didn't want to talk about music at that time, that they talked about what went on backstage.

H. Fromm: Or about their lives. So many things go on backstage. This prima donna doesn't want to go back and sing because she thought somebody offended her, and lots of hysterics! And they love to talk about it.

[chuckles] It's incredible. Because their whole life revolves around this. Rehearsals, and fittings of costumes, and, "this isn't right, and that isn't right," and arguments with the conductor, or whatever.

Dorfman: Did you have many close friends who were members of the opera, or of the symphony?

H. Fromm: Artists. Yes. Yes; conductors mainly. Not many singers. But conductors usually. You know, singing is a special talent. Singers remember all the notes, and all the words in a language they don't even understand. If they sang in German, and I would say anything in German to them, they wouldn't know what I was talking about. Because they learn it very often by rote. They do have this fabulous memory.

Dorfman: Which of the conductors comes to mind as a special friend?

H. Fromm: Oh, Steinberg, Leinsdorf, Bruno Walter, Josef Krips. There were so many.

Dorfman: What do you remember about Josef Krips?

H. Fromm: Very nice. You know, socially, they are all different than professionally.

William Steinberg

H. Fromm: When I saw some of them conduct, some of them were very nasty, or very sarcastic, but socially they were very nice, very much fun. And very interesting. Steinberg, especially was a very intelligent and interesting man.

Dorfman: In what way?

H. Fromm: Very knowledgeable. His hobby was studying Sanskrit, on the side. When he came to our house, he always disappeared into the other room. He was always called "Steinberg," never by his first name--

Dorfman: Which was?

H. Fromm: His first name was William, but nobody seemed to use it. I said, "What are you doing in this room?" (He was conducting the opera here.) And he said, "I'm watching the fish bowl. I watch the fish open their mouths, and not a sound comes out. And it's so wonderful." [laughter]

Dorfman: That's wonderful. And Terence McEwen?

H. Fromm: I know him very superficially.

XIX PERSONAL REFLECTIONS AND FAMILY

Dorfman: You know, it has occurred to me that you are a very contemporary woman both as an executive and a wife. And I wondered if you would comment on that.

H. Fromm: I was brought up that way. Since my mother and I were alone after I was fourteen, I had to really take care of her when she made a trip. I had to get the tickets, I had to look up the time table. I had to take care of a lot of things, and I was very independent. Leaving at the age of seventeen to study in Essen and then for England alone, and having to take care of myself and my finances--makes you independent.

In my husband's family, it was just the opposite. All the women were very dependent on their husbands. They were all together every night at my parents-in laws' house. Every night they waited for the men to finish their business talk, and then they all peeled the apples and oranges. To this day, I can't peel an orange, [chuckles] because I was so rebellious.

I was there when I was sixteen. I was supposed to learn--I was a housedaughter, it was called--to learn how to keep house. Of course, I hated it--together with a cousin of my husband's, who's still a good friend of mine. I said, "I couldn't live a life like this." They weren't allowed to go to the movie, or to go out alone. My father-in-law was a very strict man. He ruled the house, and the women catered to him.

For them it was a natural thing to do, for me, it was an unnatural thing to do, since I was more-or-less on my own.

Dorfman: So that your role today is largely the result of your early training and experience. Because you certainly are a most unusual woman.

H. Fromm: I always went from one extreme to the other. I was very sheltered as a very young girl. I never had to clean my room; threw everything on the floor, nobody ever said anything. Then, from

H. Fromm: that well-to-do environment, I went to Paris and to poverty, real poverty, and having to work.

I suffered physically because I now had to sit for eight hours and sew instead of practicing--exercising my body for eight hours. In this place where I worked, there was a toilet for the employees that was a hole in the floor. Sometimes, I had to stretch myself. I went into this toilet room and made the bridge--you know, you bend backwards, to stretch my body. One day, I forgot to lock the door, and my boss came in. [laughs] Can you imagine this sight? I was perched backwards over this hole. He thought I was totally crazy.

Dorfman: You were in a backbend?

H. Fromm: Yes. And from that environment, again, then I went to the sheltered environment of my relatives in London, who were very conservative and very Orthodox. From there I went to Israel, or at that time, Palestine, I worked as a cashier, and then I went to New York, and got married and had a child. There were a lot of changes. But you get used to it; you do miss it after a while.

Children and Grandchildren

Dorfman: You have one son, David, who lives in the East, and grandchildren who are in the East as well. Your son was born in New York, and your daughter was born here and resides here.

H. Fromm: In Sausalito. She has a son of about sixteen months, Alexander Lurie.

Dorfman: And your daughter is married to Rabbi--

H. Fromm: Brian Lurie.

Dorfman: Your son--

H. Fromm: He lives in Syracuse, New York, and is the chief of surgery there, at New York State University [SUNY], upstate New York, medical school. He's married to Barbara Solter, from San Francisco. Her father is a doctor. We have three grandchildren. Marc is twenty-one, Ken is nineteen, and Kathy is sixteen. Marc goes to Tufts, and Ken goes to Haverford, and Kathy is still home.

Dorfman: What are your expectations and hopes for your family?

H. Fromm: That they may be content--happy at whatever they choose to do.

Alfred Fromm

Dorfman: Can you tell me what life with Mr. Fromm is like?

H. Fromm: [chuckles] Hectic. All my life, I heard him say, "I will take it easier soon." That has been from the very beginning. In the beginning, he had to work very hard, and he traveled for six months out of a year, which was very hard on me.

Dorfman: Oh, it must have been.

H. Fromm: He worked really terribly hard, to make a go of things. I'm sure he told you why. That we lived in Riverdale, New York. And we had to go out there by subway and then walk for twenty minutes. He said, "I wasn't born to go by subway anywhere, and to be shoved in winter, smelly cars, or to be shoved in, in summer, when everybody smells." So he said, "I am working as hard as I can to get out of this." So, it's been work, work, work. A lot of traveling, a lot of fun, too.

Dorfman: You were telling me earlier about his feeling about space, as opposed to your feeling about space.

H. Fromm: I like space, but not too much of it. I like a manageable space. This [house] is sort of--if you don't have household help, it becomes sometimes difficult to manage. It's manageable if I would enjoy staying home all day and cleaning up, then it would be manageable, but I'm not the person to do that.

Dorfman: But, Mr. Fromm, you said--

H. Fromm: He said he needs space, because, "positive thoughts need space and a view."

Dorfman: You were going to tell me about how you came to build this house.

H. Fromm: We lived across the street. My husband, when I visited San Francisco the first time in 1939, took me out here, and said, "This is where we are going to live one day." We moved in 1941 to San Francisco. After two years we were thrown out of our apartment in San Francisco because we had a child. And moved to 845 El Camino Del Mar, and looked across the street at this lot all the time. We owned a small piece of property in Silicon Valley, a pie shaped piece of property, which was of not much use to anybody.

Then my husband heard that General Motors was going to build a plant there, so he offered them that lot, and they paid a fair amount. On his birthday, on a Sunday, the real estate man came and said, "This lot in Seacliff is for sale. But you have to make

H. Fromm: up your mind right away." So I said to him, "Forget that you ever had the lot, and pay the price," which he did. And blamed me for everything afterwards, but he said, "I'm glad you did push me. I wouldn't have done it on my own." And we built the house with one of the finest views of the Golden Gate in San Francisco.

Dorfman: You were telling me that Mr. Fromm told the architects, William Wurster and Theodore Bernardi, that he wanted--

H. Fromm: A large house. And I wanted a small house that looked spacious. But, since they were good businessmen, they built a large house. And we needed the space at that time. Life was easier then, you got household help without trouble. We had a lady for twenty-five years, and then somebody for ten years, and then it was disaster afterwards; every few months it was somebody else.

Dorfman: Which must make it very difficult to maintain.

H. Fromm: Also, I'm getting older, and it's harder. And I'm not a person who likes to stay home all day, be a housewife. So I'm really dependent on help in this house. I would like to move in to a smaller one, but my husband loves this house so much. Because they were always property owners in Germany, and he feels this is his property, this is his place. He doesn't want to move to an apartment, he would feel displaced. He said, "I was displaced once, and I don't want to feel displaced again." So we just do the best we can.

So some things are dusty, and some things are run down. It's the only way to live.

Dorfman: It's lovely. The view is magnificent.

H. Fromm: The view is fantastic, yes.

Dorfman: What do you think your most important contribution has been?

H. Fromm: It's hard to say. Bringing up children to be good citizens, having a nice family and to be successful. Starting the Fromm Institute for Lifelong Learning. Doing a lot of things for other people.

Dorfman: What do you look forward to?

H. Fromm: Staying healthy--for all of us.

Dorfman: About Mr. Fromm, what do you think is most important to him?

H. Fromm: The family, his business. He loves to work, and he still, at the age of eighty, goes daily to the office. He leaves at eight thirty, and comes home at five, five thirty, and works on so many

H. Fromm: different projects that his mind has to change every hour. That's what keeps him going.

He comes home exhausted, and takes a nap, and then he's fresh.

Dorfman: He has a wonderful mind.

H. Fromm: Yes. He can switch his mind very quickly.

Dorfman: Mr. Fromm has made many important contributions to the general community, and to the Jewish community, both. What do you think he would consider the most important of those contributions?

H. Fromm: At one time it was the wine museum, which is now relocated. The San Francisco Jewish Community Museum, and all the other things he contributes to, not only money but time, to various organizations.

Dorfman: What else might come to mind before we conclude?

H. Fromm: That I've had a very happy and productive life, up to now. With many tragedies too. But, on the whole, it's been good.

Dorfman: Thank you for your time, and your involvement. Your interview will provide a valuable resource.

Transcribed by Anne Schofield
Final Typed by Shannon Page

INTERVIEW WITH ALFRED FROMM ON MUSIC

INTERVIEW HISTORY -- Alfred Fromm

Alfred Fromm and Kurt Herbert Adler had a lot in common. They were born and raised in German-speaking countries before World War I, they left Europe in the 1930s in the face of Nazism, they eagerly launched new lives and careers in the United States, and they brought a special brand of drive and determination to achieve excellence in their work.

Fromm gave an extraordinary amount of time to the support of the arts in the Bay Area. His involvement with San Francisco Opera grew from his close personal relationship with Kurt Adler, whom he met in the early 1940s just after Adler had come from Chicago to work as chorus director for the opera company, and the two remained friends until Adler's death in 1988.

Mr. Adler valued Mr. Fromm's expertise in financial matters and suggested he join the opera board of directors in 1973; Mr. Fromm did and has been a member ever since, although he is the first to say that his only role was to work directly with Mr. Adler and then only on matters financial. He supported the company generously, he offered advice when it was asked of him, and the Fromm home welcomed opera artists during many a fall season. Fromm recalls many post-performance parties where wine and champagne flowed, and from which he retired only at four a.m.: "I'm going to bed," he announced, "because I'm a working man!"

In this interview, Mr. Fromm talks about the dynamics of arts giving in the Bay Area, the Opera Association boards of directors, and other arts companies with which he has been involved, and about the life and career of Kurt Adler.

The interview took place in Mr. Fromm's Montgomery Street office in downtown San Francisco on a warm fall afternoon. He edited the text and deleted certain portions he thought duplicated materials in the large oral history.

Caroline Crawford
Music Interviewer

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Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California at Berkeley

XX ALFRED FROMM AND THE SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

[Date of Interview: October 29, 1987] ##

A Longstanding Friendship: The Fromms and the Adlers

Crawford: Mr. Fromm, you are not a newcomer to oral history.

Fromm: Well, I am no expert, but I have done it before.

Crawford: Yes, I enjoyed reading your transcripts.

We are going to focus in this interview on your friendship with Kurt Herbert Adler and your involvement in the arts here. So let us begin with your talking about how you came to meet Mr. Adler and his family.

Fromm: We lived in New York when we first came in 1936 from Germany. I was in the wine business all my life and I wasn't the first generation: our family in Germany were vintners for a few hundred years. When I, with my associates, developed a business in the United States for California wines, it was necessary for me to go to California, as our firm had taken the representation of the Christian Brothers in Napa, which is a religious order of the Catholic Church. The Christian Brothers at that time didn't know very much about wine, and so I moved in 1941 with my wife and our son to San Francisco to counsel and to help.

Some friends of ours knew Kurt Adler from Vienna, and they introduced him to us. Mrs. Adler at that time was pregnant with Ronnie. As we both had started our profession, to build a life in the United States, we became good friends. They came to our house, and we came to theirs. We knew their children, and it was really a personal friendship. We exchanged our experiences because we were both newcomers. That's the way it started, and has remained so, this friendship. It's now forty-four years that we have known each other.

Crawford: What do you remember of Mr. Adler when you first knew him, in the 1940s?

Fromm: Well, I could see immediately that Kurt was a very active and ambitious person, a real doer. He was first chorus master at the opera, under Mr. Merola.

Mr. Merola, the general director of the San Francisco Opera and a very intelligent man, soon found out that Kurt Adler was a very unusual person. A man who worked immensely hard, who needed very little sleep, who had a lot of good ideas, and quickly, in a very short while, Kurt became Maestro Merola's assistant. When Mr. Merola died, Kurt was appointed the director of the San Francisco Opera.

Fromm: During his long tenure he has done a fabulous job. It is not easy to be the director of a first-rate opera company, because you are dealing with a lot of egos and some I would consider kind of nuts.

Crawford: You are thinking of artists now?

Fromm: Yes. And I remember that once we were at the opera backstage when they gave Boris Godunov, and I saw the people running around because the star said he couldn't sing, for whatever reason.

Kurt came down and talked to him, and ten minutes later the opera opened and it was a fabulous performance. But then I said to Kurt, "Kurt, believe me, I'd rather be in the wine business than in your crazy one."

Crawford: And what did he say?

Fromm: He laughed. He said, "I wouldn't mind being in the wine business, but I know nothing about it."

Kurt Adler as Impresario

Crawford: What do you think worried Mr. Adler about the business? Or put another way, what taxed him?

Fromm: Well, there were always serious negotiations with the unions, and the need of cutting expenses to a reasonable level. The public in San Francisco is quite spoiled. They want a first-class performance; they want some famous stars singing. Of course all this unfortunately costs lots of money. Kurt was fabulous in all these matters; he was a first-rate money-raiser, because he knew how to talk to the right people. He had this great gift of

Fromm: communication, regardless of whether the people were large or small. This is a gift that very few people have. He could be charming or tough--whatever was called for.

He was a tough taskmaster too, but I think he was the toughest with himself.

Crawford: Did he like fund-raising?

Fromm: Well, I don't think it was a matter of liking, but a matter of necessity. During that time, the opera was smaller, and there was a lot less money than there is today.

I remember when the Adlers were at our house for a dinner party. Tom Clausen, a friend of ours, who was at that time the president of the Bank of America, and is presently its president again, was one of our guests. Kurt talked with him, and he did it with such enthusiasm that the Bank of America sponsored one of the performances of the opera. That was a personal experience that happened in our home.

Crawford: The story illustrates that he was always working.

Fromm: Yes, he did. During the years we knew each other we always gave after the opening of the opera a party at our house. This was before the Fol de Rol existed, which is a money-raising affair. Kurt gave us a list of all the stars and they came out at twelve or one o'clock when we could feed the artists with a good dinner, because they mostly eat very little before they sing.

There was plenty of wine and champagne, and the conductors and singers came--all the top people--and it generally went on until three or four o'clock in the morning, when I said to our guests, "There is still plenty to eat and plenty of wine, but I'm going to bed because I'm a working man!" [laughs]

I think we had almost every one of the illustrious opera stars in our house through the first fifteen or twenty years that we knew each other.

Crawford: And you knew the children then. Kristin and Ronald.

Fromm: Yes. It might interest you that before Kurt and Nancy were engaged they came to our country house in Kentfield. We have a pool there and it was summer, and he said to my wife, "This is a very important day, because Nancy will tell me within the next ten minutes if she will marry me or not." And he said to my wife, "What do you think?" And Hanna said, "Well, if I had a daughter I would think twice too, because there is a big difference in your ages." We knew each other so well, that it was an honest answer. Kurt said to Hanna, "Are you for me or are

Fromm: you against me?" She said to him, "You wanted an honest answer."

Anyway, they did get engaged in our summer house in Kentfield. It was a good marriage because Nancy is a very intelligent, spunky and pretty woman with a great love of the opera.

Crawford: You've shared some important moments, then.

Fromm: Well, yes. We are old friends.

But what he did for the opera was unprecedented, and I think there was never anyone else who could do that with limited funds. He was a master in spending the money where it had to be spent, and not spending where it could be saved.

Opera in San Francisco: Fund-Raising

Crawford: Do you think it is extraordinary that a city the size of San Francisco supports such an opera house of world-class stature?

Fromm: It is, definitely. I'm a director of the opera for a very long time; I think about fifteen years.

Crawford: According to my list of the boards of directors, it is since 1973.

Fromm: Yes. Maestro Merola and Adler have done so much to make the opera a glamorous undertaking that it has its local roots. The difficulty, I believe, is that when the old families who have given so much money to the opera in previous years are not alive any more, the children inherit and have to pay heavy taxes, and it will be much more difficult to get these large amounts donated.

So it is necessary for the opera to be on a broader basis. This was for a long time a very social affair, but will become less and less so as time goes on.

Crawford: Is there a different kind of distribution of wealth today?

Fromm: Well, it's not the same kind of old wealth, where taxes were almost nonexistent or very low. When people die with a very high inheritance tax and large fortunes get split up, it means that the children and grandchildren don't have the large funds available that have been in the past the main part of the opera's income.

Crawford: What about corporate giving?

Fromm: Corporate giving is still not at the level it should be. Corporations are generally not generous; of course they always have the excuse that they are spending the money of the stockholders, which is true, but on the other hand San Francisco is not a manufacturing town--it is a headquarters town, and in order to be a headquarters town it is necessary to have cultural advantages that do not exist somewhere else.

For example, let's take Detroit, which is a larger city. It has three or four hundred thousand people more than San Francisco, but it doesn't have an opera. A cultural enterprise can only be successful, Miss Caroline, if it is broad-based, and the opera in San Francisco is a San Francisco institution.

Crawford: So you expect that the population here will continue to support the opera and the other arts?

Fromm: Yes, but in the long run it will perhaps be a different sort of people and not anymore such large gifts. There are such wonderful people here, like Louise Davies, but one day Mrs. Davies will not be here, and I don't know if Mrs. Davies' children will be willing to spend that kind of money. Those are all in the future, but they have to be considered today.

In addition to that, I feel that the opera has to spread out and not just be a San Francisco institution but a regional institution for northern California.

Crawford: When do you attend performances?

Fromm: We have box seats at the opera. First we went on Tuesday nights, but that was such a bad night for me, so now we go on Fridays.

Crawford: Is that a different audience?

Fromm: Yes. Much more democratic.

Crawford: In 1978, patrons with preferred seating had to begin paying a surcharge for their tickets. Some called it "blood money," and it did represent a change in policy.

Fromm: Yes, there was resistance. When you ask people to pay, not everybody will come forward. But it was absolutely necessary to do this, because a very substantial sum comes in this way.

On the other hand, if you can presently afford to pay $62.50 for a ticket for each performance, then you can afford this surcharge.

Serving on the Opera Board of Directors

Crawford: Let's go now to the board, because you have been a longtime member of the San Francisco Opera Association board and have bridged two administrations: that of Mr. Adler and also Mr. McEwen. How did you come to join the board?

Fromm: Well, Kurt and I, since I am a businessman, often talked about the business aspects of the opera, with which Kurt was very familiar. One day he said, "Alfred, why don't you join the board?" I said, "I can't contribute anything to the artistic endeavor of the opera, but maybe I can assist you in financial and administrative matters. If I can help, I will be happy to do it." And that is the way I joined.

Crawford: Could you compare the boards on which you have served? I know you have been on the Conservatory of Music board and others for a long time.

Fromm: Well, when I joined the San Francisco Conservatory of Music board, it was an awful mess. The conservatory was in really bad shape as an institution and in its financial setup.

As you know, Miss Caroline, nothing can be done without money. If you run an institution like that, it cannot be self-supporting.

Crawford: It cannot be.

Fromm: No, it just can't be. But a few of us at the conservatory could see that something would have to happen or it would disappear completely. When Milton Salkind came in, he took hold of it--he is a friend of ours too for many years--and he has done a wonderful job of making the conservatory an outstanding institution. It is one of the best in the country, and very many of the graduates have made fine careers.

The fact that we have the conservatory here and the opera, they really complement each other. That is what got me involved here. I figured that between the conservatory and the opera some good could be done.

And you know the opera had been for years a social affair, and that did not really appeal to me, because I felt that you need to involve many people, and I discussed this often with Kurt. He understood it well; Kurt was a very intelligent man, and he knew the way to get the cooperation of the so-called social strata of the opera.

Crawford: Tell me, what was Mr. Adler's rapport with the board?

Fromm: It was excellent. He really knew how to talk to people. You know, if you can run an opera house and deal with all the stars and unions, you can deal with almost anyone.

Crawford: What about Robert Watt Miller? You weren't on the board when he was president, but you must have known him.

Fromm: Yes. He was a great friend of the opera, and he did a great deal. But his time has passed. Today, the opera has to be a more democratic institution that needs a broader basis.

Crawford: Did the board ever resist Mr. Adler's wishes--his desire for new productions, for example?

Fromm: Not that I know of. No, I think he had the full cooperation of the board. When I joined the board, Walter Baird was president.

Crawford: What was his relationship to Mr. Adler like?

Fromm: Very good. Wally Baird is still on the board; I've known him for a long time. He was with Price Waterhouse, the large accounting firm, and I think he was very helpful to Kurt. In fact, it was one of the gifts Kurt had, that people would extend themselves to help him accomplish something that he felt was necessary. It is a very well known fact, Miss Caroline, that most of the work is not done by fifty people on the board, but by a few.

Crawford: How has the board changed?

Fromm: Well, the entire board management has changed. The president and the other officers are mostly business people, practical people, and I think this change is something that was absolutely necessary. People who see that the funds come in and many who give large amounts themselves. It's a different board today, much more democratic and much more effective.

Crawford: This relates to what you were talking about earlier, the need to become more broad-based.

Fromm: Yes.

Crawford: What was your role on the board, as you saw it?

Fromm: I didn't have a role of any importance on the board. I think I could do more by talking directly to Kurt, because if you have forty or fifty people there, it isn't conducive to do much. I have for many years helped the opera financially to the best of our ability. Whenever there was anything that needed to be done, my wife and I were there to assist, like inviting certain

Fromm: artists, which I understood was part of Kurt's public relations.

Some of the stars came to our house for dinner, and we became with some of them quite friendly. They were sometimes narrow[-minded], but with fabulous voices. And there were also some fabulous voices who were broadgauged. I hope you don't mind that I'm so outspoken!

Crawford: Not at all. That makes it more lively and a whole story.

Dealing with the Unions

Crawford: You mentioned in your own interview that you suggested to Mr. Adler that he get the unions to help sponsor lower-priced tickets. Which unions came forward?

Fromm: Very little has been done in this area. But I always said to Kurt, "We have got to get the union people interested because that makes it easier to deal with them, too." This was one of the great jobs Kurt did, to be able to deal with the unions.

But there are today a lot of union people who make very good money and could become gradually interested. I am not thinking of a union in a steel mill; it's people who made already years ago good money and who want their children to be culturally better educated. That's one thing.

The other thing is to go into the suburbs, and I mentioned this often to Kurt. The opera needs directors from San Jose; they need directors from Oakland, from the outlying districts of the Bay Area because San Francisco as a headquarters city has cultural facilities, and the population of San Francisco is really too small to raise all the money that is needed. We should expand into the very wealthy outreach territories that we have around San Francisco, and Kurt understood this very well.

Crawford: Was this implemented?

Fromm: Only to some extent. I think it will be implemented now with the people who are running the opera, the businessmen.

Crawford: Do you think the board is strong now, in the eighties?

Fromm: Yes. Particularly the officers of the board are successful, active businessmen. And you know, if you are successful in your business, you learn how to run things, and the opera is a business too, a cultural one.

Crawford: Is Mr. McEwen as much of a presence before the board as Mr. Adler was?

Fromm: Yes, but in an entirely different way. Kurt was an all-around man. He could do almost anything, and McEwen is probably not that versatile. As I told you before, I cannot criticize or account for the musical level because I'm not educated for that, and I hate to talk about things I don't know much about.

Donors for the Future: "A Great Reservoir"

Crawford: Let me ask you then about something you said in an earlier interview. You said that in earlier years, there were few Jewish members on the boards of directors. Are there more now?

Fromm: Yes, there are. You know, being Jewish is not always an easy life, but that has changed greatly in this country. I can talk about this because I come from Germany and I lived through the Nazi hell. We escaped in time, otherwise we wouldn't be alive.

I think today you have in general in the country less prejudice among the various religions and races, because in the end you know there are good people in every religion as well as bad ones. We have a great number of Japanese and Chinese citizens, some of them extremely wealthy, and also from other Asian countries. Think also of the many people of Mexican origin who are becoming integrated into the American way of life. There is a great reservoir for the future, but we must start now to get them interested. They are hard-working and their children will work for the finer things in life.

If you look back to the great disagreements between Catholics and Protestants, they were without good reason. If one wants to go to one church and someone else to another, well, let them do it. After all, we all live together in one place and we have to get along together.

Crawford: We have talked about the donor community a little and it seems to me that individual sponsorship of opera productions in the last few years have been increasing. I'm talking about contributions in the order of a quarter of a million dollars now. Do you think those sponsors are diminishing in numbers?

##

Fromm: Ultimately, they will, yes. Most of the large sponsors of the opera belong to the older generation, who were interested in the opera and did so much for it, and there will be in the future fewer and fewer of them. It is the natural way of life.

In my opinion, it is of utmost importance to get young people and people from all walks of life interested so that the opera becomes an institution that is close to the hearts of all the people, all of them looking for some romance. You know, if it becomes strictly cultural business, without some romance, then the average person says, "What the hell do I have to do with this?"

Crawford: I like your way of putting it--the idea of romance.

The Fromm Family and the Arts

Crawford: What about your own children? Are they as involved in the arts as you and your wife?

Fromm: Well, my daughter Caroline is, but my son David is less so. He is a surgeon and the chairman and chief of the Wayne State University department of surgery, which has one of the largest surgical departments in the United States. So he has four hospitals under him and thirty-two surgeons. He seems to be an outstanding surgeon, but I don't know anything about surgery. My wife does, because she is the daughter of a doctor, who was very well known.

Crawford: So that was a natural avenue for him. And Caroline?

Fromm: She is a psychotherapist and has her own practice. She just had a little girl so she is not doing much professionally right now. She is married to Brian Lurie, who is one of the most intelligent and well known young leaders of the Jewish community. He is the head of the Jewish Welfare Foundation, which is the Jewish head organization. He is a really outstanding man. They live in Sausalito. You know, most fathers think there is no man good enough to marry his daughter, but my wife and I are happy.

Crawford: Oh, that's remarkable. Good!

The Adler Temperament and the Question of Retirement

Crawford: Let me now concentrate on your friendship with Mr. Adler. How would you describe that personality?

Fromm: Well, I know that in his work, Kurt was rough and had to be rough. It was necessary to accomplish what he had to do. In our relationship, that never played any role. We always enjoyed ourselves and talked about what was going on in the world. It was a strange country to come to in some ways, when you grew up and had your roots in Europe.

On the other hand, I am one of the America-firsters. There is no place in the world like it, even with all its warts. I've been around the world quite a bit, because our firm in Germany was a very large exporter, and I traveled very extensively throughout the world, so I know what I am saying.

Crawford: Was Mr. Adler ever tempted to leave San Francisco and return to Vienna?

Fromm: I don't think so.

Crawford: Even when Maestro von Karajan invited him to Vienna as his administrative chief?

Fromm: Well, the San Francisco Opera was a bigger and more fulfilling job, that Kurt has developed. It was his child.

Crawford: Did his retirement come as a surprise to you?

Fromm: Well, Kurt and I talked about it quite a bit. The time comes for everyone. I am eighty-three, and I retired when I was seventy-nine, and I did it because I thought it was time, although I must say I'm busier now than I was for many years when I ran a substantial wine and brandy business.

Crawford: Some retirement!

Fromm: Well, I don't know what else to do. I've worked since I was fifteen years old! Retirement, though, has given me a chance to do substantial pro bono work. I spend about 80 percent of my time doing it. There is not the need to make money any more, and there is not the continuous demand on my time for business matters.

You know, it takes simple people who are willing to work and who have common sense. It is not a question of the smartest people. I have met a lot of smart people, and they have made such a mess of their own lives that it is really pitiful.

Crawford: Tell me, if you would, what Mr. Adler is doing at the Fromm Institute.

Fromm: We have always had courses in music, which were very popular, since we started twelve years ago. Since we knew Kurt very well, we asked him to become a professor at the institute, and he enthusiastically accepted.

He gave fabulous lectures, and the elderly ladies swooned, because he addresses them in the proper way, and his was one of our most popular courses.

He teaches, of course, about opera, and there are so many stories that it's an enjoyable course, and at the same time, the students learn a great deal. It's so mixed up with anecdotes, and Kurt is a master in telling it.

So we are very happy with him, and of course all our professors are paid--some twenty-five or thirty of them--and we have a waiting list of many professors now that the institute is known. Professors have the same problem as everyone else. They say when they retire that they don't want to teach anymore, but soon they feel like fish out of water.

Crawford: Teaching is what they know.

Fromm: It is what they know, and they need the adoration and the feeling that they are important. It has a lot to do with ego, I think; I'm not a psychiatrist and I don't worry about it. [laughter] Even so, I'm aware of psychiatry since Erich Fromm is my second cousin, and a few members of our family practice it.

Crawford: I didn't know that. I read his books with great pleasure.

Has Adler been content with retirement?

Fromm: Only partially, I believe.

The Adler Legacy

Crawford: Well, let me move on now to the last question: the Adler legacy. What has he left to the region and to the Bay Area?

Fromm: He has left an opera organization that is known throughout the world, which he created. When Merola ran the opera, it was a very nice local institution, but it was not an opera of world class. It was Kurt who did this. This is his greatest accomplishment, and he did it with less personnel and less money

Fromm: than anyone else who has followed after him.

Crawford: Was there genius there?

Fromm: Definitely. When I think of my own life, it's like going up a ladder: you go up six steps and then you look up and try to go another six steps, and when you are at twelve steps you try for another six. After that, you don't have to do it for the money anymore, because most likely you are financially secure; you do it because you want to prove to yourself that you can do it.

If you put a great deal of effort in yourself and you want to see how far you can go, I think that's what Kurt's life was. Maybe that's why we were always on a common level, and I think that's why I did understand Kurt. He wanted to do something outstanding for his own satisfaction.

Crawford: Was your background similar to his? Your education and upbringing?

Fromm: No, not at all. Kurt has had an entirely different education than I had. I started to serve an apprenticeship when I was fifteen, while Kurt had the whole gymnasium-university training and then started in the music and theater field. Our careers were entirely different, but I think our goals and our attitudes were quite similar.

Crawford: I appreciate your answering my questions.

Fromm: You're welcome. I hope it was what you wanted.

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Transcribed by Shannon Page
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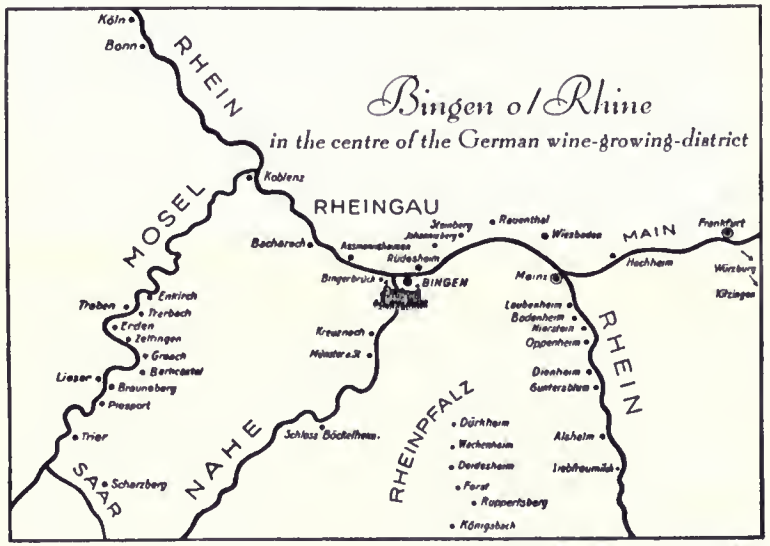
HOCKS AND MOSELLES
HOW THEY ARE GROWING AND RIPENING



MAP OF THE VINEYARDS

WINEGROWER AND VINEYARD

A lonely path leads us amidst the vine-clad slopes. Favoured by sun and earth and the blessings of Heaven for thousands of years, the diligence of the winegrower has created here a nursery for the best German wines. The vinestocks, tended by the hand of an industrious and cautious vintner, stand side by side crossing the vineyard in long, sweeping straight lines.

The life of every winegrower is inseparably bound up with his vineyards and his wine. Struggling incessantly with the inclemencies of the weather and ever fighting against the ravages of insect pests, he goes on bestowing all his love, labour and care on his vines, for early in the spring they will put forth tiny naked shoots from which the leaves will sprout, soon followed by sweet-smelling blossoms which will themselves give place to bunches of grapes. With the coming of the autumn these grapes ripen, and when they have become large and juicy the harvesting begins.

THE HARVEST

During the harvest there is much stir and movement in the vineyards. The busy harvesters go from row to row carefully cutting off the bunches of grapes and carrying them to the waiting cart, where they are immediately crushed in tubs or wine-presses.

When the summer is exceptionally long and dry the most famous districts produce the finest grapes that late Autumn can give. These grapes, the pick of the harvest, are allowed to remain longer on the vines, thus obtaining a higher content of pure sugar. The wines produced from such grapes are extremely mellow and have a superb bouquet. The choicest wines of all, however, are obtained from carefully selected grapes which are left until they have been shrivelled up like raisins by the ripening forces of the hot autumnal sun.

Joyful festivities herald the close of the harvest, the hills resound with song, and music and dancing announce the end of anxious months of toil and vigil.

Haus Fromm, Bingen a. Rhein

GEGR. 1864

ENTRANCE TO THE PRESS-ROOM

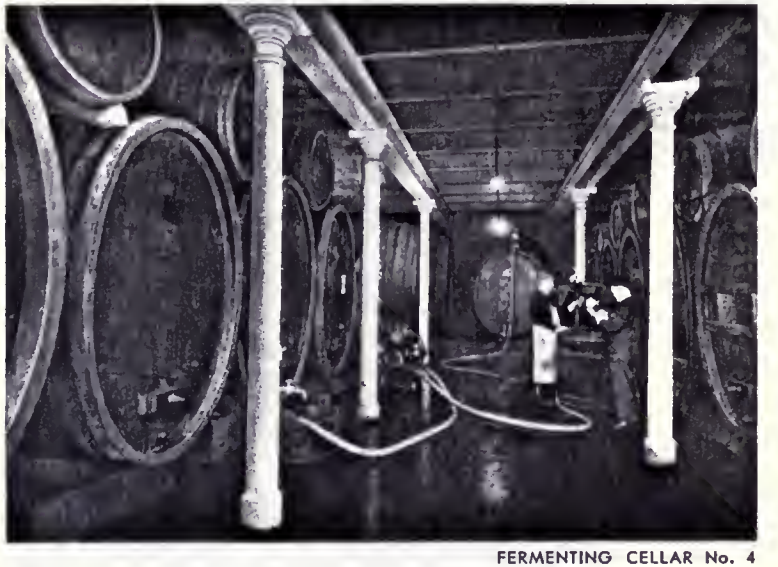
FROM THE GRAPE TO THE WINE

Let us now follow the cart wending its way from the vineyards to the press-room.

The press-rooms of the House of Fromm are laid out in a manner which affords the approaching carts sufficient space to bring the mash-vats to the winepresses. During the harvest the hydraulic presses work day and night. The must, or unfermented grape juice, flows from these presses into the fermenting vats stored in the special fermenting cellars, which communicate direct with the press-rooms.

Here a vigorous fermentation takes place; it is the great clearing process. By the end of the year the fermenting wine, which during the process of fermentation has thrown off all impurity, becomes clear, and after a first drawing-off is conveyed to the underground rock-cellars.

A CORNER OF THE PRESS-ROOM



FERMENTING CELLAR No. 4

RHINE-WINE CELLAR No. 16

THE WINE CELLARS

With their dark and vast passages hewn out of the solid rock, the underground vaults provide ideal storage for the wines.

Mountain water, clear as crystal, purls everywhere, impregnating the air with a constant humidity which preserves the wood of the barrels and prevents it from becoming dry.

In these cellars, unique among their kind, casks are stored in almost endless rows. Here millions of liters of German wine, from the lightest table-wines to the choicest vintages, await consignment to their ultimate destinations. One stand in these cellars holds half a million bottles.

Each wine, each vintage requires special care in handling, until its character has developed so harmoniously that it can be considered ready for bottling.

GEGR. 1864

RHINE-WINE CELLAR No. 4

COMMUNICATION PASSAGE IN THE MAIN CELLAR

MOSELLE-WINE CELLAR No. 12

GEGR. 1864

PASSAGE IN
BOTTLE CELLAR No. 3

MASTERPIECES OF WOOD-CARVING IN THE CABINETT-CELLAR
EXECUTED ON CASKS BY COOPERS

TASTING

GERMAN WINES AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS

Different Kinds	Character	District
Rhine Wines	Sweet, fragrant, aromatic	Nierstein, Oppenheim, Bingen
Wines of the Rheingau	Pronounced Riesling flavour, racy piquancy	Rüdesheim, Johannisberg, Hochheim
Wines of the Palatinate	Delicate and full-bodied	Deidesheim, Wachenheim, Ruppertsberg
Wines of the Nahe	Distinct bouquet of a natural and prickling acidity	Kreuznach, Schloss Böckelheim, Münster
Moselle Wines	Agreable fine acidity, full-bodied character	Berncastel, Zeltingen, Brauneberg
Stein Wines (Boxbeutels)	Earthy full-bodied character	Würzburg, Escherndorf, Randersacker

THE FROMM PREMISES

AMID THE WINE-GROWING DISTRICT

"GOOD WINE HAS ITS OWN REWARD; IN THAT IT IS NOISED ABROAD."
T. V. Eckenhard, 1727.

The landscape of the German wine-growing district owes its character to the vine-clad slopes of the hills rising and falling gently along the banks of the Rhine and its tributaries, the Moselle, the Nahe and the Main.

Amid these vine-clad slopes, and within sight of the Rheingau, lies the town of Bingen, in the heart of the German wine-growing district. In this ancient town, celebrated for its choice wines, the wine-trade and the culture of the vine itself are intimately connected.

In the Rheinuferstrasse, directly before the gates of Bingen, a stately mansion meets the eye of the traveller coming along the Rhine from the direction of Mainz; this is the main building of the far-famed wine-cellars, owned by N. Fromm.

GEGR. 1864

REAR VIEW OF FROMM'S, AT THE FOOT OF THE "ROCHUSBERG"
VIEW OF THE "RODESHEIMER BERG"

HOUSE OF FROMM AT BINGEN

Ever since 1864, the year of its foundation, the House of Fromm has devoted its attention to the growing of the choicest German wines and has for 70 years enjoyed the confidence of its clients, who are to be found not only in all Germany, but in twenty-two different countries.

The rise of the firm and its possession of one of the largest and most esteemed wine-cellars in Germany is to be attributed to expert management of the first order and to the close touch invariably kept with its customers.

In this nursery for German wines 150 coopers and employees, supervised by the senior head of the firm, Max Fromm, and his sons Alfred and Paul, carry on their work and vie with each other in their efforts to help maintain the world-wide reputation of German wines.

GEGR. 1864

OUR TRADE MARK (REGISTERED DESIGN)

ORIGINAL LABEL AND CAPSULE WITH THE TRADE-MARK OF OUR ESTABLISHMENT ARE A GUARANTEE OF HIGH QUALITY AND A HEALTHY DRINK

GEGR. 1864

BINGEN ON RHINE AND NAHE

WE HEARTILY INVITE YOU TO PAY A VISIT TO OUR WINE CELLARS, WHICH ARE ONE OF THE SIGHTS OF THE RHINE DISTRICT

✶

GEGR. 1864

MASTERPIECE OF WOOD-CARVING ON A CASK OF THE YEAR 1765
IN THE FAMILY'S POSSESSION

GEGR. 1864

DEUTSCHER WEIN

Wie er wächst und reift

Ein Gang durch die Kellereien von

HAUS FROMM
BINGEN AM RHEIN

DEUTSCHER WEIN

WIE ER WÄCHST UND REIFT

SEIT 1864

N. FROMM

WEINBAU UND WEINGROSSKELLEREIEN

SEIT 1864

BINGEN A. RH.

EINE GROSSE DEUTSCHE WEINKELLEREI AM RHEIN

GUTER WEIN HAT DIESEN LOHN:
DASS MAN LANGE REDT' DAVON.

T. V. Eckehard, 1727

Inmitten der Rebenhänge des Rheines und der Nahe, nur durch den Strom vom Rheingau getrennt, unweit der Rheinpfalz, der Mosel und Saar liegt Bingen im Herzen des deutschen Weinlandes. In dieser alten Weinstadt laufen die tausend Fäden des Weinbaus zusammen. Wer von Mainz her rheinabwärts kommt, erblickt vor den Toren Bingens, an der Rheinuferstraße, ein stattliches Patrizierhaus, das Hauptgebäude der weitbekannten Weinkellereien N. Fromm.

Seit dem Gründungsjahr 1864 widmet sich das Haus Fromm der Pflege des deutschen Qualitätsweines. Nahezu 70 Jahre besitzt es die

Haus Fromm am Fuße des Rochusberges

Gunst seiner treuen Freunde. Hervorragender fachmännischer Führung, steter enger Fühlungnahme mit den Freunden des Hauses, sorgsamem Eingehen auf all' deren Wünsche verdankt die Firma N. Fromm ihren Aufstieg zu einer der größten und angesehensten deutschen Weinkellereien. Da mit dieser Entwicklung die alte Kellerei des Stammhauses in Kitzingen a. M. nicht Schritt halten konnte, wurde der Sitz der Firma nach Bingen am Rhein verlegt und Kellereien und Keltereibetriebe in einer mustergültigen Anlage zusammengefaßt. Die Kellereien in Bingen sind in ihrer Geschlossenheit wohl die größten des rheinischen Weinbaugebietes und gelten bei Weinfachleuten als eine Sehenswürdigkeit am Rhein. In dieser Pflegestätte deutschen Weines wirken 150 Küfer und Angestellte unter Leitung ihres Seniorchefs Kommerzienrat Max Fromm und wetteifern in dem Bestreben, dem Weltruf deutschen Weines zu dienen.

Weinbergslage „Scharlachberg"

VON DER TRAUBE ZUM WEIN

Das Landschaftsbild des deutschen Weinbaugebietes empfängt Linie und Bewegung durch die Rebenhügel, die in Hängen und ragenden Bergen an den Ufern des Rheins und seiner Nebenflüsse Mosel, Nahe und Main aufsteigen. Klima und Bodenbeschaffenheit schufen hier die Vorbedingungen für eine Jahrtausende alte Weinkultur.

Von fleißiger, sorgsamer Winzerhand betreut durchziehen die Reben Stock an Stock in geradlinigen „Zeilen" den Weinberg. Zunächst blattlose Stämmchen treiben sie hochwachsend in der ersten Entwicklung Blätter, im Spätfrühling Gescheine (Blüten), und nach der Blüte den Beerenknoten, der erstarkend und saftbildend dem Herbst entgegenreift. Haben Natur und bodenverwachsene Winzererfahrung in den Monaten September-Oktober das Reifewerk vollendet, so rüstet man zur Weinlese.

Den Zeitpunkt der Lese bestimmt das Wetter. Sind die Herbsttage sonnig und trocken, so beginnt die Weinlese erst in den letzten Wochen

Eine Ecke im Kelterhaus

des Spätherbstes; denn umso größer ist der natürliche Zuckergehalt, je länger die Traube reift. In solchen Jahren werden die köstlichen „Spätlesen" und „Auslesen" gewonnen. Auf den berühmten Weinbergslagen schenkt man in sonnengesegneten Jahren den Trauben so lange Leben am Stock, bis sie rosinenartig zusammenschrumpfen. Sie ergeben die wertvollen „Beerenauslesen" und „Trockenbeerenauslesen", deren quantitativ geringes Kelterergebnis durch die überragende Güte dieser Weine um ein Vielfaches ausgeglichen wird.

Ein jeder Winzer lebt innig mit seinem „Wingert" und seinem Wein. So gestaltet sich die Weinlese zu einem frohen Fest: Gesang schallt von den Bergen, Musik und Tanz künden den Abschluß ernster sorgenvoller Monate der Arbeit.

In diesen Tagen sind die Weinberge von lebhaftem Ernte-Treiben erfüllt. Emsige Leser und Leserinnen schneiden die Trauben, sammeln sie von „Zeile" zu „Zeile" in Eimern und Bottichen und bringen sie zur Traubenmühle, wo die Beeren an Ort und Stelle zu Maische gemahlen werden.

Teilgang im Moselkeller Nr. 12

IN DEN FELSENKELLERN DES HAUSES FROMM

Auf dem Wege von der Traube zum Wein sind wir den geherbsteten Beeren vom Weinberg in die Kelterhäuser und dem gekelterten Beerensaft (Most) in die Gärkeller gefolgt. Der ausgegorene „Federweiße" wandert nunmehr in die unterirdischen Kellergewölbe. In diesen Lagerkellern reift der Jungwein unter fachkundiger Pflege heran. Oft dauert es Jahre, bis er ausgereift ist. Liebevolle Beobachtung und reiche Erfahrung sind notwendig, um im Wein das Beste zu wecken, was er herzugeben vermag.

19 miteinander verbundene breite Keller sind tief in die Weinbergsfelsen eingesprengt. Durch ihre stetige unveränderliche Temperatur sind sie dem Weine eine ideale Pflegestätte. Natürliches Quellwasser wird in Kanälen durch alle Kellergänge geleitet, Feuchtigkeit sättigt die Luft und bewahrt das Faßholz vor dem Austrocknen. Luftschächte regeln den Temperaturen-Ausgleich. In diesen einzigartigen Gewölben reiht sich Faß an Faß in schier unendlichen Fluchten.

Rheinweinkeller Nr. 16

Millionen Liter deutschen Weines vom leichten Konsumwein bis zu den feinsten Qualitätsgewächsen und erlesensten Spitzenweinen harren hier ihrer Bestimmung. Die Felsenkeller beherbergen nur deutsche Weißweine, während die Rotweine in darüber liegenden wärmeren Kellergeschossen lagern.

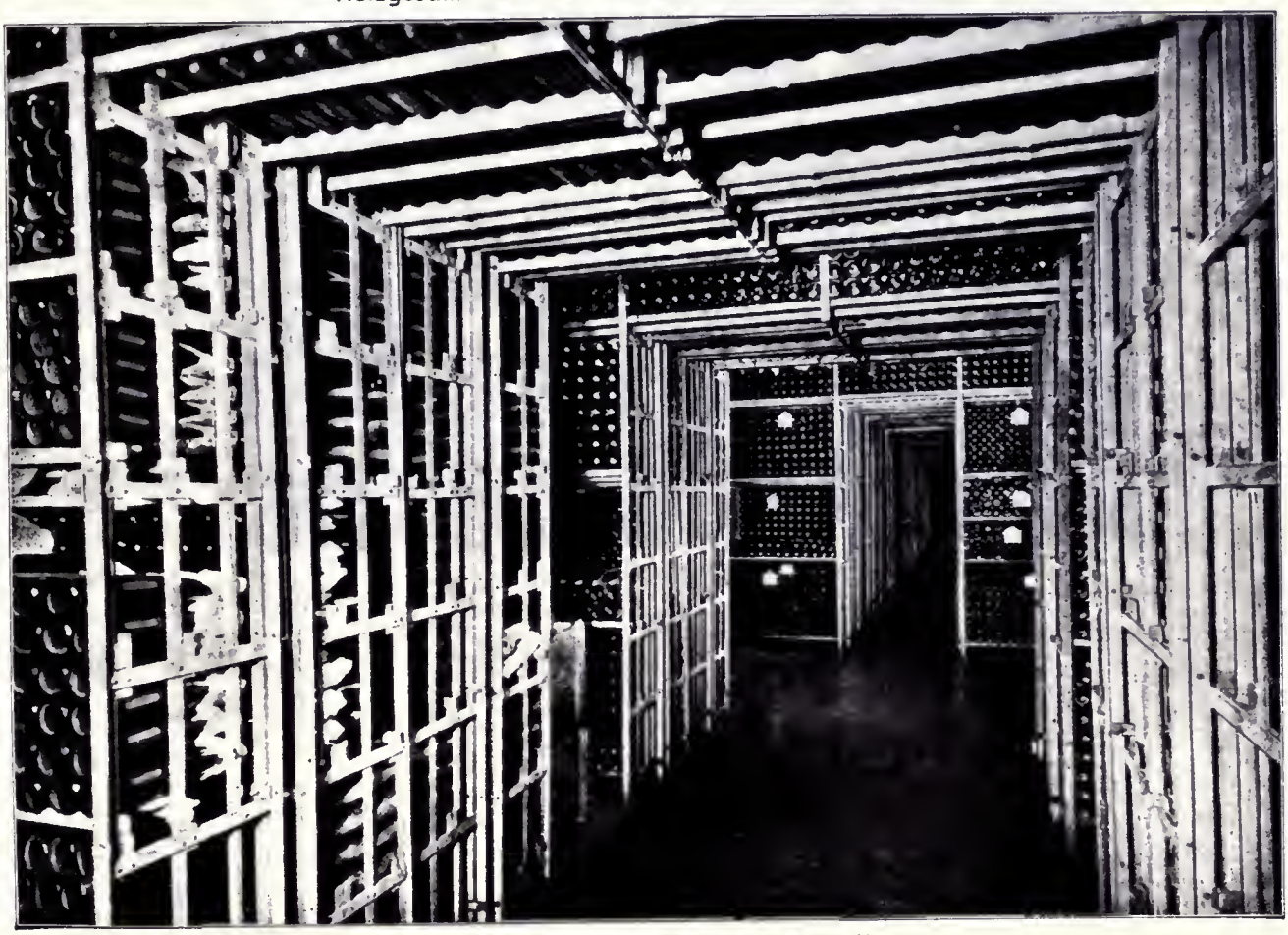
Jeder Wein und jeder Jahrgang bedarf seiner besonderen Pflege und Behandlung bis zur abgeschlossenen Reife. Erst wenn sein Wesen harmonisch entfaltet ist, wird der Wein „flaschenreif" befunden und mit Hilfe hygienischer Kellereimaschinen auf die Flasche gezogen, um dann zur weiteren, oft langjährigen Lagerung in die Flaschenwein-Keller zu wandern. In einem dieser Flaschenkeller des Hauses Fromm birgt ein einziges riesiges Gestell eine halbe Million abgefüllter Flaschen.

Weit ist der Weg von der Traube zum Wein. Jahre vergehen, bis sich der „Federweiße" in den Flaschenwein gewandelt hat und der unter sorgsamer Obhut gereifte Wein nun im Versandaufzug wieder an's Tageslicht tritt.

Verbindungsgang im Hauptkeller

Pfalzweinkeller Nr. 4

Holzgeschnitzte Küfer-Meisterstücke im Kabinettkeller



Blick in einen der Flaschenweinkeller

Seitengang im Flaschenweinkeller Nr. 3

Teilansicht aus den Versandhallen

Elektrische Aufzüge befördern die Flaschen aus den Flaschenweinkellern in die Packräume. Tagesleistung 15000 Flaschen.

Packhof

Die in den Versandhallen ausgestatteten und verpackten Flaschen treten hier ihre Reise nach dem Inland und allen Teilen der Welt an.

In 25 neuzeitlichen, dem Umfang des Betriebes entsprechenden Büros wird die organisatorische Arbeit geleistet, die den Wein von Weinberg, Kelter und Keller zu den Freunden Fromm'scher Weine führt.

WEINPROBE IM HAUSE FROMM

DIE DEUTSCHEN WEINE UND IHRE EIGENART.

Weinproben versammeln täglich den Chef des Hauses und seine fachmännischen Mitarbeiter zu bestimmter Stunde im Probierraum. Das Ergebnis der Weinprobe entscheidet über den Ausbau und die Pflege der Weine. So wird im engsten Zusammenwirken aller für den Kunden tätigen Kräfte die Gewähr für höchste Qualität und Bekömmlichkeit der Weine des Hauses Fromm geboten. Zeichen und Ausdruck dieser Eigenschaften ist das auf allen Etiketten wiederkehrende Bild des „betenden Winzers über dem rot-weiß gezackten Wappen". Verschieden wie der Geschmack der einzelnen Weine sind die Wünsche des Weinliebhabers und die Gelegenheiten, bei denen man Wein kredenzt. Entsprechend der Bodenbeschaffenheit und den klimatischen Vorbedingungen ist der Charakter der Rheinweine ein anderer als der der Moselweine, und der Pfälzer wiederum anders als der Wein von Main und Nahe.

Unsere Ausstattung (ges. geschützt)

*

Mit Bild und Text dieser kleinen Schrift versuchten wir, den Werdegang des Weines in seiner Pflegestätte darzustellen. Führt Sie, freundlicher Leser, Ihr Weg zum Rhein, so laden wir Sie herzlichst ein, uns in Bingen zu besuchen.

N. FROMM IN BINGEN AM RHEIN

SEIT 1864

EST.
EST.
Contents 1 Pt. and 7 Fl. OZ.
1932
Rauenthaler Nonnenberg
Grown and bottled in Germany
WEINGROSSKELLEREIEN UND WEINBAU
N. Fromm
Bingen

1 · 8 6 · 4
Contents 11 8 Fl. OZ.
Bottled in 1932
1929
Rüdesheimer Schloßberg
Product of Germany, Contents not over 14 Vol. % Alc.
WEINGROSSKELLEREIEN UND WEINBAU
N·FROMM
G·M·B·H·
(KITZINGEN)
BINGEN
AM RHEIN

Dean of Wine Tasters Sips for 3 Hours Daily

By DILYS JONES

The Central Tower Building a notably modern structure, has on its third floor a small, highly aromatic room in which a man of talent carries on the pursuit of a career begun sixty-five years ago on the banks of the Rhine.

Max Fromm, the man, is a wine taster.

He is 80 years old, is generally regarded as the dean of America's wine tasters, and every day he passes three hours in the room sipping 150 different wines.

SWALLOWS LITTLE.

Since each wine rates four or five sips, wine enters and leaves his lips more than 600 times in those three hours. He does not get addled, of course, because a wine taster swallows exceeding little.

Max Fromm brought his delicate art here from Germany and he did so because he saw no point in wasting it on the men of the Nazi creed.

He was born to the world of wine in Bingen, Germany.

His grandfather had a vineyard, his father created a winery, and young Max became an apprentice at the age of 12.

WINS "LEHRBRIEF."

When he reached his fifteenth year he got his lehrbrief, the "letter of finished education" that dubbed him an authority on wine.

In the natural course of family events he became president of the Fromm winery.

In the unnatural course of totalitarian events he saw the day, in 1938, when the winery was taken from him.

A Nazi leader told him he had taken a liking to the winery and would purchase it. The sum was negligible. The alternative was a concentration camp.

COMES TO U. S.

Max Fromm and his wife, Lea, left the new Germany in disgust and came to America.

New York held them but a few months. Fromm, then 55, was anxious to embark again on his career so he came to San Francisco and joined forces with his sons, Norman and Alfred, who distribute Christian Brothers wines and brandies and own the Paul Masson Vineyards.

The English language was strange enough to him to cause him to bypass the administrative element of the business and become the master taster. The taste of wine, he pointed out, is a universal language.

So, daily at 9 in the morning Fromm enters his tasting room and he stays there until noon.

NO INTERRUPTIONS.

He brooks no interruptions for those three hours.

The procedure which requires his full concentration is as follows:

He lifts the glass and swirls it gently.

Then he sniffs the bouquet, for the smell is almost as important as the taste.

He lowers the glass, then puts it to his lips.

He takes the tiniest sip imaginable and rolls the liquid on the tip of his tongue.

Finally, he spits out the wine.

Very occasionally he swallows a bit, to see how smoothly it goes down.

WRITES OF REACTIONS.

After each sampling he writes his reactions in a notebook.

One reads: "Clean, harmonious and round—almost seductive."

But another reads: "Poor dead and has no tail. (Having no tail means having no aftertaste.)

Still a third will be a combination: "Fresh and young but sticks."

Max Fromm is enthusiastic about his work anyway.

But he has an extra enthusiasm these years because he is convinced that California wine will some day be the best in the world and he regards himself as a pioneer in the attainment of that goal.

EXPERT—Max Fromm, 80, called the dean of America wine tasters, sips in a test at his office in downtown San Fra cisco. During his three-hour office day he sips 150 differe wines. He started the profession sixty-five years ago in Germa —San Francisco Examiner Photo

SEES NEW GAINS.

He firmly pooh-poohs the notion that only Europe can provide great wines.

To his thinking, long and painstaking work can make California's soil and climate combine to produce even greater wines.

He wouldn't go back to Germany on a bet—because the future of wine is here.

But he has one complaint and that concerns the younger generation.

He is shocked because his sons cannot match his 600 sips in three hours—they're only good for some 200.

San Francisco Examiner

June 8, 1953

PAUL FROMM
1028 WEST VAN BUREN STREET
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60607

October 20, 1986

Mr. Alfred Fromm
655 Montgomery Street
Suite 1720
San Francisco, California 94111

Dear Alfred:

The enclosure contains the information you requested.

Cordially,

Paul Fromm

PF:CE
Encs.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

NAME:	Paul Fromm
DATE OF BIRTH:	September 28, 1906
PLACE OF BIRTH:	Kitzingen, Germany
PROFESSION:	Business Executive
FAMILY:	Married; one daughter
PROFESSIONAL POSITION:	President, Kenwood Corporation and Fromm Management Corporation
ASSOCIATIONS WITH CULTURAL & EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS:	President of the Fromm Music Foundation until 1972; since then Director of the Fromm Music Foundation at Harvard University.

MEMBERSHIP IN THE FOLLOWING VISITING COMMITTEES:

University of Chicago
  a) Division of the Humanities
  b) Music Department

Boston University
  Board of Visitors

Princeton University
  Advisory Council

University of Illinois
  Citizens Committee

Director, American Music Center

HONORS AND AWARDS:

1960:
Award in the field of philanthropy from The Immigrant's Service League (presented by the late Adlai E. Stevenson)

Chicagoan of the Year in the Arts -- Chicago Junior Association of Commerce and Industry

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH -- PAUL FROMM (cont.)

HONORS AND AWARDS (cont.)

1967:
Honorary Doctor of Music Degree -- New England Conservatory of Music

Laurel Leaf Award for Distinguished Achievement in Fostering and Encouraging American Music -- American Composers Alliance

1973:
Jessie L. Rosenberger Medal for "incomparable contribution, through the Fromm Music Foundation, to the composition, performance and criticism of contemporary music" -- University of Chicago

Distinguished Service in the Arts -- Cliff Dwellers Club, Chicago

1974:
Honorary Doctor of Music degree -- University of Cincinnati

1976:
American Music Center Award

1977:
Mu Phi Epsilon International Music Sorority Citation of Merit

1978:
Illinois Governor's Award for the Arts

1983:
The George Peabody Medal for Outstanding Contributions to Music in America, awarded by The Peabody Institute of The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland.

1986:
Golden Baton Award of the American Symphony Orchestra League

Mr. Fromm suggested that the following be included:

For his accomplishments, Paul was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Music degree from the New England Conservatory of Music in 1967, and in 1974 an Honorary Doctor of Music degree from the University of Cincinnati. He is a member of the Visiting Committee of the Music Departments of the University of Chicago, Boston University, Princeton University, and of the University of Illinois Citizens Committee. Until recently he was also on the Visiting Committee of Harvard University.

In 1960 he received an award from The Immigrant's Service League, presented by Adlai E. Stevenson, in the field of philanthropy, and in the same year was named Chicagoan of the Year in the Arts. In 1978 he received the Illinois Governor's Award for the Arts; in 1983, the George Peabody Medal for Outstanding Contributions to Music in America, awarded by The Peabody Institute of The Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. In 1986, he received the Golden Baton Award of the American Symphony Orchestra League.

Paul Fromm, Classical-Music Patron, Is Dead

By JOHN ROCKWELL

Paul Fromm, a German-born wine importer who became the most active and distinguished private patron of contemporary classical music in the United States, died Saturday at the Bernard Mitchell Hospital of the University of Chicago after a series of heart attacks. He was 80 years old and had lived in Chicago.

Through his Fromm Music Foundation, now based at Harvard University, Mr. Fromm dispersed commissions to American composers of every stylistic sort. He also supported performances of new music, especially at the University of Chicago, the Tanglewood Festival (where the "Fromm week" of contemporary concerts became an annual tradition) and the Aspen Music Festival.

"We composers have lost our dearest friend and leader," said Ralph Shapey, the composer, in a statement. "He had a total commitment as our champion. He believed in us and dared us to believe in ourselves." At an 80th-birthday concert for Mr. Fromm last year in Chicago, Mr. Shapey had called him "the Esterhazy of the 20th century," in reference to Haydn's patron.

Earle Brown, a composer and the Fromm Foundation director who will be primarily responsible for its continuance, said yesterday: "He was the leading sponsor of contemporary music in the United States. His love and support for new music were just extraordinary."

Family of Vintners

Paul Fromm was born on Sept. 28, 1906, in the small Bavarian town of Kitzingen, into a prosperous family of vintners (Erich Fromm, the psychoanalyst and author, was a cousin). Mr. Fromm played four-hand piano duets with his brother Herbert as a child and attended the contemporary-music festivals at Donaueschingen between 1921 and 1926. He later said his first encounter with Stravinsky's "Sacre du Printemps" in Frankfurt in 1927 "made a 20th-century man of me."

Eventually, Mr. Fromm decided to enter the family business, but even in the 1930's he intended to devote himself to the patronage of modern music. Forced to emigrate in 1938, he arrived in this country on the Fourth of July, married that year and opened the Great Lakes Wine Company in 1940. He became a citizen in 1944, but was well-known for his impenetrable German accent all his life.

By 1952, Mr. Fromm felt ready to carry out his musical plans, and began his foundation in Chicago. From the first, he espoused a serious, even Germanic, ideal of elite musical culture. His tastes had been formed during the great early years of modernism, and although he deliberately broadened the stylistic range of music he supported in later years, he never abandoned his principle that great art was a rarefied experience, and that his nurturing should be devoted to work that truly needed it.

"We must realize that serious art does not appeal to everybody," he wrote in The New York Times in 1978. "It never did and it never will. It is up to us to create stimulants to cultural development and to foster an environment that is friendly to creative pursuits. We can do this best not by trying to bring serious art to more people but by educating a more knowledgeable and more devoted minority of art patrons. We must look to them as a nucleus from which a healthy culture can grow."

Advice From Composers

A modest man who once described himself as "a footnote in musical history," Mr. Fromm surrounded himself with composer advisers. At first, he relied primarily on such committed modernists as Milton Babbitt, Elliott Carter and Gunther Schuller.

But twice, Mr. Fromm made decisive efforts to diversify his commitments. In 1972, he withdrew his support from Perspectives of New Music, a Princeton-based journal he felt had become too closely identified with the Serialist position. And in 1983, he publicly questioned the narrowness of Mr. Schuller's programming at the Tanglewood Contemporary Music Festival (or "Fromm week"), withdrawing his support. Mr. Schuller, who resigned a year later on other issues, complained bitterly that Mr. Fromm was "now opposing everything he ever stood for."

Undaunted, Mr. Fromm reorganized his foundation, dividing it into three geographical areas and signing on nine new composers as advisers to ensure a wider range of commissions. He also moved his summer festival to Aspen, Colo., and entitled the first series of concerts there in 1984 "Musical Pluralism in the 1980's."

Mr. Fromm's annual financing could never match that of the National Endowment or the Rockefeller Foundation. But its steady concentration on contemporary music lent it an influence far beyond its means. In the 1950's, the foundation's annual budget was around $50,000. By the 80's, that figure had risen to $150,000, although it varied from year to year and he was loath to provide exact totals. By now, nearly 200 composers have received commissions, amounting to an honor roll of 20th-century American classical music.

Received Many Honors

Through all the shifts of musical fashion, Mr. Fromm held true to his faith in the vitality and importance of the music of our time. In one of the many speeches and articles he was asked for in his later years, Mr. Fromm wrote in 1979: "I am convinced that our century will eventually prove to be one of the great musical centuries. If we choose to ignore what is happening in our midst, it is exclusively our loss."

In addition to his foundation, Mr. Fromm served at various times as an overseer of the Boston Symphony and a leader of several Chicago charities. His many honors included honorary doctorates from the New England Conservatory and the University of Cincinnati, the Golden Baton Award from the American Symphony Orchestra League and awards from the University of Chicago, the Peabody Institute and the American Music Center.

Mr. Fromm is survived by his wife, Erika, a psychologist; a daughter, Joan Greenstone, of Chicago; two grandsons, Michael and Daniel, and his brothers Alfred, of San Francisco, and Herbert, of Brookline, Mass.

New York Times

July 6, 1987.

New American music: The living legacy of Paul Fromm

By John von Rhein
Music critic

Appreciation

Paul Fromm once described himself as "a footnote in musical history." He was being far too modest. When the annals of the classical music life of America in the second half of the century are drawn up, this remarkable patron of the arts, who died in Chicago last week at age 80 after a series of heart attacks, surely will rate a chapter.

To the beleaguered American composer, faced with an indifferent musical Establishment on one hand and a confused, sometimes hostile, concert public on the other, Fromm represented more than a benefactor. He was a fervent champion of everything they stood for, a means of liberating their creative energies, a super-impresario who used his power and influence to secure more and better performances of contemporary classical music.

Setting a personal example of passionate commitment to new American works through the activities of his Fromm Music Foundation, Fromm sought to shake our leading musical institutions out of their narrow allegiance to dead composers. Once that was achieved, Fromm argued, these institutions could once again "savor their roles as witnesses to music in the making," and our composers would regain the central position their 18th and 19th Century European predecessors had occupied in the musical life of their societies.

"A composer should not feel as though he is working in a vacuum," Fromm said in 1982, on the occasion of his 75th birthday and the foundation's 30th anniversary. "A composer needs to be a part of the music community." Right up to his death, Fromm labored tirelessly to make it happen.

Although it is unlikely that his crusade will drastically alter the direction or assumptions of our performer-dominated musical culture in the near future, his efforts have for more than three decades significantly broadened the repertory of new American works. And they have helped the serious listening public establish a closer bond with the important musical thought of our time.

At a special tribute to Fromm last February in Mandel Hall, the Chicago composer Ralph Shapey (a recipient of several Fromm commissions) called him "the Esterhazy of the 20th Century," a reference to Haydn's patron. And Shulamit Ran, another Chicago composer, said that Fromm's lifework "is a living testimony to the fact that one person singlehandedly can make a difference."

True enough. The Chicago wine merchant and arts patron was the most active and important private patron of new music in this country. To date the Fromm Music Foundation, which Fromm established in 1952 at Harvard University and which he co-directed until his death, has commissioned works from nearly 200 composers, a veritable "Who's Who" of new American music.

These include such giants of contemporary composition as Elliott Carter, Milton Babbitt and Roger Sessions, and many less celebrated, though no less dedicated, musicians. Fromm was particularly interested in assisting young unknown composers who had something uniquely their own to express.

Although the Fromm Foundation's annual budget is modest by comparison with those of the National Endowment or the Rockefeller Foundation (in recent years it has varied between $120,000 and $150,000), its influence has reached far beyond its means. It is difficult, in fact, to think of a deserving American composer of the past 35 years who has not benefited from Fromm's patronage.

Among the many Fromm Foundation commissions are Carter's Double Concerto for Harpsichord and Piano; Babbitt's "Vision and Prayer"; Lukas Foss' "Echoi"; Shapey's "Songs of Ecstasy"; Charles Wuorinen's Violin Concerto; and George Rochberg's "Music for the Magic Theater." The list is long and impressive.

But as Fromm readily conceded, commissioning the music was always the easy part: The major hurdles came in getting the music played and heard. Fortunately, a loose network of new music performance groups has arisen across the country, and the foundation takes pains to see that after a worthy new piece is played in, say, Chicago or New York, it will be taken up by other ensembles and eventually become part of the active repertory.

From the first, Fromm relied on the advice of such established East Coast academic composers as Babbitt, Carter and Schuller. (Schuller for many years served as a co-director of the Fromm Foundation and director of the Tanglewood Music Festival.) But in 1983 Fromm questioned the narrowness of programming at the Tanglewood Contemporary Music Festival (or "Fromm Week"), withdrawing his support. Schuller bitterly denounced Fromm's decision, saying that the patron was "now opposing everything he ever stood for."

Fromm defended his position, claiming that the festival had become too monolithic, narrow and exclusive in its esthetic outlook. With that he restructured the foundation in such a way as to make it more open to nonacademic, more experimental styles including Minimalism, electronic and theater music. It was a courageous, even controversial, stance, but one that reflected the patron's deep commitment to encouraging the musical diversity he felt mirrored today's pluralistic society.

Although Harvard is the Fromm Foundation's official residence, for years its working address has been an austere warehouse at 1028 W. Van Buren St. that is the home office of the Great Lakes Wine Co., which Fromm began in 1940. He later sold the business but for the past five years stayed on as consultant, retaining his office and secretary. There, surrounded by dusty cases of wine and bundles of music manuscripts, Fromm held court in his thick German accent, making pronouncements on baseball (another of Fromm's passions) and the crisis of American high culture.

He grew up in a wealthy Jewish home before fleeing Hitler's Germany, but he lived his entire life without ostentation, believing that respect for humanistic values was far more important than wealth. Through his foundation he gave away millions of dollars that could have bought him lakefront apartments, big cars and other symbols of material success. Instead, he chose to live his modest version of the good life in Hyde Park, where his widow Erika, a distinguished psychologist, pursues her career at the University of Chicago.

The last time I spoke with Fromm was in April at a piano recital in Mandel Hall. I used the intermission to sound him out on my choices for a Tribune article I was preparing on living composers who would be remembered 100 years hence. He listened carefully to what I had to say, beaming his approval at some of my choices, vigorously disagreeing with others. Fromm had his own convictions about music, and he voiced them with the implacable moral authority of an ancient rabbi dispensing God's law to a terrified flock. I will miss our musical skull sessions.

Over the years Fromm saw wide pendulum swings of musical fashion, but he never lost his allegiance to the time-honored virtues of artistic quality and originality. Nor did he set himself up as a supreme arbiter of masterpieces. "I do not try to be the custodian of posterity," he once declared.

He nonetheless carried his advocacy of new music throughout the nation, delivering speeches and writing articles on contemporary music. His many honors included honorary doctorates and awards from the American Symphony Orchestra League, Chicago Junior Assn. of Commerce and Industry, American Composers Alliance and the U. of C. music department.

Despite all this attention, Fromm harbored no illusions about the impact he might have on the increasingly market-oriented music industry. "The influence of any foundation must be marginal," he once said. "We must realize that serious art does not appeal to everybody."

What is needed instead, he added, was to foster an environment that is friendly to creative pursuits. "We can do this best not by trying to bring serious art to more people, but by educating a more knowledgeable and devoted minority of art patrons. We must look to them as a nucleus from which a healthy culture can grow."

What directions will the Fromm Foundation—in so many ways an extension of its founder's tastes and philosophy—assume without Fromm around to sponsor or guide its activities? Composer Earle Brown, a Fromm Foundation director, will be primarily responsible for its continuance. The commissions Fromm paid for before his death no doubt will be carried out. Beyond that, however, lie many question marks that composers all over the nation must be contemplating with fear and trembling.

For the death of the Fromm Foundation would be unfortunate, but the death of the kind of uncompromising vision and high cultural idealism that its founder stood for would be a tragedy beyond measure.

Chicago Tribune

July 9, 1987

201

The American Society for Jewish Music

is pleased to invite you to

a concert honoring the
distinguished composer

HERBERT FROMM

Participating Artists

Lawrence Avery, tenor
Miriam Brickman, piano
Sally O'Reilly, violin
Jack Gottlieb, piano
Lorrie Glaze, piano
Janice Lowenstein, flute

SAMUEL ADLER
guest speaker

Sunday Afternoon, January 30, 1977
at 3 P.M.

BUTTENWIESSER HALL
THE 92nd STREET YM-YWHA
Lexington Avenue and 92nd Street
New York City

Admission is free of charge
and all are invited to attend

— Program —

Opening Remarks ..... Albert Weisser
President, ASJM

Program Chairman ..... Arthur Wolfson
Cong. Temple Emanu-El, NY

THE MUSIC OF HERBERT FROMM

1. Violin Sonata (1949)

   allegro
   con spirito
   andante
   allegro

   Sally O'Reilly, violin
   Lorrie Glaze, piano

2. Sholom Aleichem

   Veohavto
   Ovos
   Vayechulu
   Benediction (Yevorechecho)

   Lawrence Avery, tenor
   Jack Gottlieb, piano

3. Fantasy for Piano — in one movement (1971)

   (The composer writes of this work: "Although several independent themes appear in the Fantasy, the main substance is a folklike tune which comes as an unbroken melody in the last part of the work but is foreshadowed in the preceding music through all sorts of disguises".

   Miriam Brickman, piano

4. 23rd Psalm

   Grant us Peace

   Lawrence Avery, tenor
   Jack Gottlieb, piano
   Janice Lowenstein, flute

5. Guest Speaker: Samuel Adler

   "Herbert Fromm -- the Man, His Music and Achievement"

6. Response by Herbert Fromm

   Questions and remarks are
   invited from the audience

* * * * *

HERBERT FROMM was born in 1905 in Kitzingen, Bavaria and was educated at the State Academy of Music in Munich. He was conductor at the Civic Theater in Bielefeld (1930) and at Wurzburg (1931-33). He then went to Frankfurt, where he continued his musical activities at the Kulturbund and was assistant organist at the Liberal Synagogue. He came to the United States in 1937 and served as organist at Temple Beth Zion in Buffalo (1937-41). He studied with Paul Hindemith in 1941 at the Berkshire Music Center, Tanglewood. He has been Music Director and organist at Temple Israel, Boston, Mass. since 1941 and is now organist emeritus. A widely published and performed composer of both sacred and secular works in a variety of vocal and instrumental forms, his compositions include, aside from those heard this afternoon; String Qurtet (1957), Hag Ha-matzot, suite on Passover themes for harpsichord, flute and cello (1967), Chamber Cantata, text by Judah Halevi (1966), Psalm Cantata (1963), Six Madrigals for mixed chorus (1951), Miriam's Song (1945) which won the first Ernest Bloch Award, and the following important works for synagogue worship: Adath Israel (1943), Atonement Day Music (1948), Avodat Shabat (1960), Chemdat Yamim (1964). Dr. Fromm is also a graceful writer — poetry in German, memoirs "The Key of See" and his recently completed "On Jewish Music: A Composer's View". It is widely acknowledged that Dr. Fromm has been since World War II one of the major musical forces in American Jewish music.

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PART TWO: MARKETING CALIFORNIA WINE AND BRANDY

Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

The Wine Spectator California Winemen Oral History Series

Alfred Fromm

MARKETING CALIFORNIA WINE AND BRANDY

With an Introduction by
Leon D. Adams

An Interview Conducted by
Ruth Teiser
in 1984

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PREFACE

The California wine industry oral history series, a project of the Regional Oral History Office, was initiated in 1969 through the action and with the financing of the Wine Advisory Board, a state marketing order organization which ceased operation in 1975. In 1983 it was reinstituted as The Wine Spectator California Winemen Oral History Series with donations from The Wine Spectator California Scholarship Foundation. The selection of those to be interviewed is made by a committee consisting of James D. Hart, director of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; John A. De Luca, president of the Wine Institute, the statewide winery organization; Maynard A. Amerine, Emeritus Professor of Viticulture and Enology, University of California, Davis; the chairman of the board of directors of the Wine Institute, who is elected annually; Ruth Teiser, series project director, and Marvin R. Shanken, trustee of The Wine Spectator California Scholarship Foundation.

The purpose of the series is to record and preserve information on California grape growing and wine making that has existed only in the memories of wine men. In some cases their recollections go back to the early years of this century, before Prohibition. These recollections are of particular value because the Prohibition period saw the disruption of not only the industry itself but also the orderly recording and preservation of records of its activities. Little has been written about the industry from late in the last century until Repeal. There is a real paucity of information on the Prohibition years (1920-1933), although some commercial wine making did continue under supervision of the Prohibition Department. The material in this series on that period, as well as the discussion of the remarkable development of the wine industry in subsequent years (as yet treated analytically in few writings) will be of aid to historians. Of particular value is the fact that frequently several individuals have discussed the same subjects and events or expressed opinions on the same ideas, each from his own point of view.

Research underlying the interviews has been conducted principally in the University libraries at Berkeley and Davis, the California State Library, and in the library of the Wine Institute, which has made its collection of in many cases unique materials readily available for the purpose.

Three master indices for the entire series are being prepared, one of general subjects, one of wines, one of grapes by variety. These will be available to researchers at the conclusion of the series in the Regional Oral History Office and at the library of the Wine Institute.

The Regional Oral History Office was established to tape record autobiographical interviews with persons who have contributed significantly to recent California history. The office is headed by Willa K. Baum and is under the administrative supervision of James D. Hart, the director of The Bancroft Library.

Ruth Teiser
Project Director
The Wine Spectator California
Winemen Oral History Series

10 September 1984
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

CALIFORNIA WINE INDUSTRY INTERVIEWS

Interviews Completed by 1984

Leon D. Adams *Revitalizing the California Wine Industry* 1974

Maynard A. Amerine *The University of California and the State's Wine Industry* 1971

Philo Biane *Wine Making in Southern California and Recollections of Fruit Industries, Inc.* 1972

Burke H. Critchfield, Carl F. Wente, and Andrew G. Frericks *The California Wine Industry During the Depression* 1972

William V. Cruess *A Half Century of Food and Wine Technology* 1967

Alfred Fromm *Marketing California Wine and Brandy* 1984

Maynard A. Joslyn *A Technologist Views the California Wine Industry* 1974

Horace O. Lanza and Harry Baccigaluppi *California Grape Products and Other Wine Enterprises* 1971

Louis M. Martini and Louis P. Martini *Winemakers of the Napa Valley* 1973

Louis P. Martini *A Family Winery and the California Wine Industry* 1984

Otto E. Meyer *California Premium Wines and Brandy* 1973

Harold P. Olmo *Plant Genetics and New Grape Varieties* 1976

Antonio Perelli-Minetti *A Life in Wine Making* 1975

Louis A. Petri *The Petri Family in the Wine Industry* 1971

Jefferson E. Peyser *The Law and the California Wine Industry* 1974

Lucius Powers *The Fresno Area and the California Wine Industry* 1974

Victor Repetto and Sydney J. Block *Perspectives on California Wines* 1976

Edmund A. Rossi *Italian Swiss Colony and the Wine Industry* 1971

A. Setrakian *A Leader of the San Joaquin Valley Grape Industry* 1977

André Tchelistcheff *Grapes, Wine, and Ecology* 1983

Brother Timothy *The Christian Brothers as Winemakers* 1974

Ernest A. Wente *Wine Making in the Livermore Valley* 1971

Albert J. Winkler *Viticultural Research at UC Davis (1921 - 1971)* 1973

INTRODUCTION

Alfred Fromm's interview is a fascinating narrative of the contributions by an emigre German expert in premium wine marketing to the post-Repeal advancement of California's grape and wine industry. Historians of the industry and of its important by-product--brandy--will find explanations in his interview of some hithertoo little-understood aspects of the industry's progress since the late 1930's.

What his modest recital does not fully explain, is the part played by the late Samuel Bronfman, who headed the worldwide Seagram wine and spirits empire, in enabling Fromm and his associates to build Paul Masson Vineyards and The Christian Brothers into major factors in the industry.

In 1943 during the Second World War, when the U.S. government restricted whiskey production, Bronfman had Seagrams purchase the Mt. Tivy winery in the San Joaquin Valley, and also the then-small Masson mountain winery in Saratoga, from Martin Ray. Bronfman's purpose was to market brandy made at Mt. Tivy under the premium-quality name of Paul Masson. When that plan was dropped, Seagrams sold Mt. Tivy to The Christian Brothers, and part ownership of the Paul Masson vineyard and winery to the partnership of Fromm and Franz Sichel.

I have known Alfred Fromm since 1938, when, while still residing in New York, he first visited me and my then-associates at the Wine Institute offices in San Francisco. I later met his father and his brother Norman, and was privileged to witness each stage of their achievement, with brother-in-law Otto Meyer, in building Paul Masson into one of the nation's leading wineries. Visiting Brother John and Brother Timothy at the Brothers' winery in Napa County, I also observed the renaming, inspired by Fromm, of their wines from "Mont La Salle" to "The Christian Brothers." Brother John shared Fromm's long-held view that wines of different years should be blended in order to provide consumers with uniform flavor year after year. This is why the Brothers and Paul Masson Vineyards resisted for many years and until quite recently, the trend toward vintage labeling of premium California wines.

The Christian Brothers Wine Museum (The Wine Museum of San Francisco), established in 1974 by Alfred Fromm, was an unselfish effort to acquaint Americans with the noble cultural

history of wine. He made valiant efforts to preserve the Museum until 1984, when, after the sale of Iromm and Sichel, Seagrams decided to move the Museum to their headquarters in Ontario, Canada.

Leon D. Adams
Author of The Wines of America

27 August 1984
Sausalito, California

INTERVIEW HISTORY

Alfred Fromm was interviewed on two successive mornings, May 3 and May 4, 1984, at his office at 655 Beach Street in San Francisco, shortly before the building was taken over by Seagrams, which, as he explained in the interview, had purchased it the previous year. Final conferences on the interview and the photographs to illustrate it were held in his new office at 655 Montgomery Street in San Francisco.

Mr. Fromm's characteristic mildness and firmness are reflected in the interviews. A courtly man with the manners as well as the speech rhythms of his native land, he spoke with deliberation but without hesitation. His life as a highly successful salesman of wines and brandy in the United States was built upon the principles instilled in him during his early years with his family firm in Germany, principles which he articulated in the interview.

Leaving Germany during the Hitler regime, he chose the United States because of the freedom here, as he explained, and that freedom, combined with his diligence and marketing ability, created his success. Together with Franz Sichel, whom he had known in Germany and met again in the United States through Samuel Bronfman of Seagrams, he created the firm of Fromm and Sichel in 1945 as successor to Picker-Linz, through which he had represented The Christian Brothers since 1937. His part in the history of the development of The Christian Brothers' wines and brandy is told here, as well as the part played by his brother-in-law, Otto Meyer. Their part in the rehabilitation of the Paul Masson winery is also discussed here. It was during their leadership of Masson that the development of the Salinas Valley as a vineyard district began, when Masson and Mirassou, both looking for land beyond Santa Clara County, joined forces to investigate the potentialities of Monterey County.

The initial interview transcript required little editing. Mr. Fromm corrected some minor errors and added a number of dates from his records. He preferred the spelling Seagram's, with an apostrophe.

Related oral history interviews in this series are those of Otto E. Meyer, CALIFORNIA PREMIUM WINES AND BRANDY, completed in 1973, and Brother Timothy, THE CHRISTIAN BROTHERS AS WINEMAKERS, completed in 1974.

Ruth Teiser
Interviewer-Editor

10 September 1984
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California at Berkeley

I GERMANY 1905-1936

[Interview 1: May 3, 1984]##

The Firm of N. Fromm

Fromm: The firm of N. Fromm was started by my great-grandfather, Nathan Fromm. He was a schoolteacher in a small wine village, and I'm told—I didn't know him--that he had eleven children. The salary of a schoolteacher in those days was really minimal, and there never was enough money to feed and clothe the children and buy them shoes. So my great-grandfather then started to help some of the winegrowers in this small wine village and advised them how to make better wines as he was a more educated man, and he taught them about sanitation and so on.

As a result these vintners came up with a better product. They were not very flush with money either, and they paid him very often by giving him some wine as his fee.

So then he started to sell the wine and gradually built up a little business. And after some years my great-grandfather decided he should go into the wine business because he could not make a living as a teacher, that he would buy the wines from those vintners he knew in the Franconia district of Germany. It became after a little while quite a nice business. He traveled within Bavaria (because the Franconia wine district is in Bavaria). He died, I understand, when he was in his sixties, and then my grandfather took over.

By that time the family was already in the wine business. My grandfather, Josef Fromm, developed the business further. He died very young, when he was in his early forties, and I did not know him either. Then my father, Max Fromm, who was thirteen years old when his father died, took over and left school, because someone had to make a living. He was an unusually capable man and developed later

Fromm: on into one of the best-known wine tasters in Germany, and became then an adviser to the government, and over the years made the firm of N. Fromm one of the leading firms in Germany.

The firm was at that time in Kitzingen on the River Main where there were very many small wine firms, but our firm of N. Fromm was the largest there.

Apprenticeship and Studies, 1920-1924

Fromm: When I was fifteen years old I had graduated from middle high school. I was apprenticed to a large wine firm, Feist and Reinach, in Bingen-on-the-Rhine, and I served a three-year apprenticeship. And, as it was in those days, my father had to pay for my education at this wine firm. But you really learned the wine business right from the ground up, starting with the vineyards and moving into the cellars. You learn an awful lot between fifteen and eighteen that you don't learn later on. If you are an apprentice in Germany, you are not nothing; you are less than nothing. [laughs]

But it was very good training. In the winter you had to be in the office at six o'clock in the morning and stoking the fire for the office, and later on at eleven o'clock go out and get the sausages and the bread for the people for their second breakfast. But I really learned the wine business.

The owner of the firm where I was apprenticed was one of the outstanding men in the wine industry. His name was Joseph Guembel. After I was there for two years, he took me into the wine tasting room. There was every day a wine tasting between twelve and one. I arranged the glasses and made notes for him, and then he said, "Try this," and "Try that." I learned from Herr Guembel how to taste and evaluate wine. He started to like me, and I was very much interested. In fact, I never wanted to be in any other business since I was a young kid, than the wine business. And I learned an awful lot. When I was eighteen years old, I thought I knew a great deal about German wine. But you know, when you are very young you don't know how many things you <u>don't</u> know.

Selling Wine for N. Fromm, 1924-1936

Fromm: So after I was through with my apprenticeship I went to the Weinbau-Schule, which was an agricultural college in Geisenheim,

Fromm: which in those days was the leading viticultural school in Germany, and stayed there for about a year, taking various courses in wine chemistry, wine treatment, and so on.

After that--by that time I was nineteen years old—I joined our firm in Kitzingen. My father then insisted that after I had worked another year in the cellars that I go out and be conversant with the selling business of wine, because the marketing of wine was always a problem for everyone.

So I started to travel extensively in Germany when I was twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two years old, and I worked very, very hard. My father insisted that I only call on new customers. I was paid commission, but only half of what regular salesmen were paid, because that was a German educational idea, that a son during his learning period should not make as much as everyone else, but I made good money anyhow. [laughing]

When I was twenty-three, twenty-four years, I had already in my travels six or eight young men with me whom I trained and who became good salesmen afterwards.

Teiser: To whom did you sell?

Fromm: We sold mostly to consumers.

Teiser: Direct?

Fromm: Direct. The wine business in those days in Germany was that way. You called on consumers, and it was a tough job because very many people didn't want to see you. But somehow I managed to do quite well.

In 1924 our firm started to go into the export business, and I traveled very extensively then in the export business and became director of exports when I was twenty-five years of age. I traveled in England, in Belgium, in Holland, and particularly up in the northern states, in Denmark, Sweden, Finland, and Norway.

First Travels in the United States

Fromm: We were advised by our American agents that Prohibition would be repealed in the United States, which finally took place on December 5, 1933. As I was the oldest son, I was sent here to build a market. (I had a younger brother who was in the business, too,

Fromm: Paul, who's now in the import wine business in Chicago) On December 4, I arrived in New York, and I never have seen such excitement.

Teiser: Would you describe it?

Fromm: I never had been in such a large city as New York City. The people were all celebrating, and there were a lot of people who were drunk because it was the first time they could buy legally alcohol. On the other hand, the Depression was still on, and the repeal of Prohibition gave the people a great moral lift. They felt things would get better, so they took it as a good omen that times would improve, which fortunately they did. But in those days there was a tremendous amount of unemployment and very great hardships to which most of the people were not accustomed.

I went to our agents, Picker-Linz importers in New York, and worked with them because none of the partners in the firm had anything to do with wine before. They had ran other businesses, and I was the only one who knew something about wine. And then I traveled very extensively throughout the United States. I had a little Ford car and I went from one end to the other, from north to south, from east to west. I think I have been in every city of fifty or a hundred thousand at that time existing in the United States.

It was very, very difficult then because American people were not used to drink wine, and it was mostly an upper class that knew a little about wine, that had traveled to Europe before. But I managed to sell quite a bit and built a net of distributors.

The most interesting experience I had was when I went in January of 1934 to Los Angeles, because I had heard there were many movie stars who made a tremendous amount of money, and there were no licenses yet at that time. I had some connections to Mr. Carl Laemmle, who was head of Universal Pictures, and he gave me some recommendations. I called on some of the big movie stars, and I was amazed how well they received me. They gave me very nice orders for expensive wines. In those days we had those fabulous 1921 wines. You could get sixty or ninety dollars a case--for ninety dollars you got a Schloss Johannisberg '21 Auslese, and it was a tremendous price.

Then I wanted to call on William Randolph Hearst. I called him from my hotel in Los Angeles. He didn't talk to me, and his secretary told me they would come back to me and let me know if Mr. Hearst could see me. What I didn't know was that they were

Fromm: checking up on me, who I was, because, the idea that someone could think I might be a gangster or bootlegger never occurred to me. [laughter]

Teiser: Let me interrupt you. You said somebody could be a gangster. There was a good deal of opprobrium, was there not, about any wine man, that carried over from Prohibition?

Fromm: Yes.

Teiser: Did you feel it?

Fromm: Yes, I did, and I was very much upset by it, because when people talked about wine, they said we are in the booze business, and that hurt my feelings very much, because the wine business in Europe was always a highly respected business and really had nothing to do with hard liquor. I hardly knew any hard liquor. When I came to this country for the first time I tasted American whiskey and Scotch whiskey because I never before had an opportunity to do that. At home we had some German brandy that was always considered good for your health, and you drank it once in a while. But as children we never got any hard liquor. But we always got a little wine with dinner. So I grew up with wine, and I must say until today--I am seventy-nine years old--I have drunk wine every day. I don't touch anything during the day, but I have half a bottle of wine for my dinner, and I consider this better than vitamins or Valium.

When I called on Mr. Hearst, he gave me orders for some rare, immensely expensive wine, the very finest that was made in Germany. Hesitatingly, I said to Mr. Hearst, "You know, Mr. Hearst, that wine sells for three hundred dollars a case." I have never seen or tasted anything like it since then.

Teiser: What was it?

Fromm: Nineteen eleven Steinberger Kabinett. Trockenbeerenauslese from the Prussian domain in Eberbach. It was marked "Jahrhundert Wein" by the Prussian government and it really was.

Then I offered him some other very outstanding 1920 and 1921 Rheingau wines and Franconia wines, and he gave me an order for thirty cases or so. It amounted to over five thousand dollars, which in those days was an enormous amount of money.

Teiser: Where did you meet him?

Fromm: Mr. Hearst visited with us when he was in Bad Nauheim, a very well known health spa. There was a Profesor Groedel whom he consulted,

Fromm: and then after he felt better he wanted to make a few excursions, and he came to Bingen, which was not very far, and visited our winery and said to my father, "When your son comes over to America, have him call on me." Of course, we took this for a regular invitation and didn't know that this was often just a polite saying like "Let us have lunch together sometime."

Teiser: Where here did you meet him? In San Francisco?

Fromm: No. I was invited to San Simeon. He sent his plane. I was received by Marion Davies, who was a very charming and nice lady. I was a young, inexperienced man, and she was very kind to me. I was introduced to a lot of people, many of them famous movie stars, and other big people but I never had heard their names before, so it didn't make any difference. [laughing] But in those days a young European, who was in the wine business, was something new for better educated people, or people who had traveled widely. So apparently I filled the bill.

Teiser: Did you go to San Simeon other times also?

Fromm: No.

I got some other recommendations from them. Some of the most famous movie stars gave me very nice orders. In those days if you paid for a case of wine fifty, sixty or ninety dollars, it was a big price. So I sent these orders to Germany, and I spent altogether six months in the United States and then went back.

Teiser: Were you in Northern California?

Fromm: Yes.

Teiser: Did people in San Francisco buy the same way?

Fromm: Being more conservative, they didn't buy this way, but I called on Mr. Paul Verdier, who was the president and owner, I believe, of the City of Paris. A Frenchman. Quite well known, quite well versed in wines. He gave me a very nice order.

We did some good business in the U.S.A. and actually between 1933 and 1936 my own sales amounted to almost 26 percent of the wine imports from Germany. Of course, the total business was small in those days, but they were all good wines, because I could see right from the beginning that the only chance German wines would have would be to sell the very best, and address myself to a special group of consumers; it was not for the average man who didn't drink wine and drank whiskey or beer.

Teiser: That certainly gave you a good idea of the United States, then.

Fromm: Yes.

Teiser: At that time did you like it well enough to think you might ever come back here?

Fromm: The fact is at that time the Nazis were already in power, and our family is Jewish, so it was always a consideration: should one stay, could one stay in Germany or not? After my first visit to the United States I made up my mind this is the place I wanted to live. I had traveled in England, and I liked it very much there. But I loved the freedom here and the chances offered. If you did the right thing, you really were on your own, something which to a German was entirely new.

So I came back by the middle of 1934 to Germany, and I was traveling in the European countries for the export of our wines, where we did quite well. I think we sold to about forty foreign countries altogether, our German wines.

The next year again I went to America and spent again in '35 and '36 six months each year traveling and completing a net of distributors. I got acquainted with a lot of very good people. They were very kind to me, and I really felt it was the place I wanted to live.

II THE UNITED STATES SINCE 1936

Partnersip in Picker-Linz, New York

Fromm: By 1936 the Nazi situation looked very threatening, and I decided that we had to get out of Germany. I was the first one of our family to come to the United States. I got married in 1936 to a girl that I had courted since she was sixteen years old, Hanna Gruenbaum. We are married now forty-eight years and we are still very happy.

Teiser: You came to New York first?

Fromm: Yes. We came to New York. Then the firm of Picker-Linz, who were our agents, offered me a small partnership. It was a very small firm. And we came with almost nothing because we couldn't take anything out of Germany. They let us take out some furniture and our clothes and some personal belongings, but no money.

So I became a partner in this firm with a minimum investment of maybe a thousand or two thousand dollars advanced by my wife, and this is the way we started here in this country.

I went for Picker-Linz to Europe quite a few times in the following years, in '36, '37, as they were in the imported wine business. And I traveled extensively in Europe in the wine countries, in France, Italy, Spain, and so on.

Teiser: Buying for them?

Fromm: Buying the wine, because I was the only one who was qualified to do that.

Teiser: Were the wines shipped in bulk or were they bottled?

Fromm: We only bought bottled goods.

Alfred Fromm in 1936, the year he came to the United States.

Alfred Fromm at an interview conference, July 19, 1984.

Fromm: But I could see the preparation for war of the Nazis. I saw the underground bunkers in Germany, and I saw in the Ruhr, which was a heavy industrial part of Germany, the armaments they produced. I could see that this would lead to a war. I told my partners that one day we will be completely cut off from our foreign sources, that wines cannot be shipped anymore, and that if we wanted to remain in this business, we'd better make sure we find an American source of supply.

Many people didn't believe that there was a war coming. My partners were skeptical, too, but they said, "Well, if you are so convinced, why don't you go to California and see what you can do?"

I just want to show you how I got into the California wine business.

Teiser: That's a missing link that I had not known.

Fromm: So in the middle of 1937 I came to California. At that time there were just a few wineries, and I looked around and called on every winery in California to see what could be done.

Teiser: What was your impression? You had been to wineries all over the world--what did you think of the California wine industry at that time from that survey you made?

Fromm: The industry as such in those days hardly did exist. The aftermath of Prohibition was still very much in evidence. There were many vineyards with the wrong kind of grapes. The equipment in the wineries was very old because there was no money to replace it. The winery buildings were very old. There was really nothing there to be particularly attractive. Most of the wineries that I called on said, "Well, we would be glad to give you the agency, but you must put some money in," and this was something that we didn't have.

Teiser: Let me take you back again. You had a sudden view of something that most people saw developing. What were the outstanding wineries among those that you visited?

Fromm: There was Beaulieu. There was [Louis M.] Martini. There was Wente [Bros.]. And there was Martin Ray, who had the Paul Masson winery. There were maybe four or five premium wineries that made quite acceptable wine.

Teiser: Was there a quality relationship to the fine wines of Europe?

Fromm: No, absolutely not. However, as I traveled so extensively in California, and particularly in the Napa Valley, and as I knew something about vineyards and saw the soil and the various scientific reports that had been made, I had the feeling that if this was handled properly, we can make in California a wine that ultimately could be world class. I was a young man, but of course when you are young you are enthusiastic and optimistic. I felt it could be done.

Association with the Christian Brothers, 1937-1983

Joining Efforts with the Brothers

Fromm: So in my travels I came to the Christian Brothers in Napa. The Christian Brothers at that time were in financial difficulties. As you know, they are a religious order of the Catholic church, and they had built monasteries and some colleges like St. Mary's College, during the heyday of the boom, and then when the Depression started they couldn't pay their bonds any more, and they were in some sort of bankruptcy, like today we have Chapter 11 or something like that.

So I called on them. There was Brother John, who was the head of the winery, who was a few years younger than I, and Brother Timothy, who was probably two years younger than I, and the three of us, we put our heads together and we said, "Well, we have to do something," because the only way the Brothers could get out of their financial difficulty was to sell some wines.

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Inasmuch as they were not bootleggers, they had accumulated an inventory of old wines which they did use for sacramental wine. This inventory was among the best in California.

So we put our heads together and we were good partners, because they had no money and we had no money [laughing]. But we all were young, and I felt we had to make a success, otherwise we wouldn't eat, because many more members of my family had arrived in the U.S. without hardly any money.

Teiser: Did you consider an association with any other wineries before that?

Fromm: No, I really didn't. None really appealed to me as much as Christian Brothers, and one reason for it was, too, that I had a great feeling for the integrity of religious organizations in the wine business, because in Germany, particularly on the Moselle, some of the finest vineyards are in the hands of religious organizations, and also in Franconia. In the Rheingau the church always had very important holdings of some of the very finest vineyards. That was one reason why I thought it might be a good thing to inspire confidence in the consumer. Even so, I was connected with Christian Brothers for 46 years and we never mentioned the religious angle, because it's a poor way to sell. If you ask a Catholic to buy Christian Brothers wine because it's made by a Catholic order, it's a poor way to do business. So this never in any way came into play.

So in 1938 I spent about four months at Mont La Salle vineyards in Napa up where the monastery is. I slept in the bishop's room but I always had to get up very early because at five-thirty one of the Brothers came through all the corridors with a bell and said get up for mass. And breakfast was at six-thirty. If you were not there at six-thirty there was no breakfast because they did not run a hotel [laughing].

But I got up early, and Brother John, Brother Timothy and I went into the winery and we took a sample of every barrel, a few hundred small and larger, we tasted the wines, and we made some blends. At that time there were no varietal wines, so we blended a burgundy and a sauterne, some Riesling, and a few wines of this sort. Then by late fall of 1938 we were ready to go to into the market.

Beginning to Market Christian Brothers Wines

Fromm: The wines were considered in those days premium wines. (They wouldn't be considered so today, but after all this was 1938, 46 years ago). We developed a unique label. In fact my wife, who is more artistically inclined than I, first drew it up with lipstick. We thought a Christian Brothers label in the shape of a triptych would be the right label, and we had it printed by a printer who helped us a little, because money was so scarce that we really had to save every penny, and we did a lot of the work ourselves. Brother John and Brother Timothy worked in the winery and I worked in it too, so it was really a joint undertaking.

Fromm: When we started out to sell the wine, first in New York and then in some other places--

Teiser: Through Picker-Linz?

Fromm: Through Picker-Linz as exclusive agents for the Brothers--it was very hard to sell California wines. There were really only two lines of American wine available that made some claim to quality and that had wider distribution that the few premium wineries in California. They were Taylor, New York, and Christian Brothers. Those two lines were the two lines that were in almost every store in New York and in many other states.

Teiser: I have been told that wine drinkers in New York were used to the taste of European wines so that they had to get accustomed to California wines. Is that correct?

Fromm: It is correct to some extent. Those were wine drinkers, and it took us quite a few years before we really got to the consumer that was used to European wines, because at that time we hadn't got American people yet to drink table wine. They drank sweet wine, port and sherry, also because it was the cheapest form of fortified alcohol. The tax on fortified wine was much lower than it was on distilled spirits. But we were quite successful in a small way, and we then extended the business into New Jersey, into the middle West, into Chicago and California. I traveled very extensively six, seven months a year calling on distributors, traveling as a salesman, because we were in fact missionary men. Most of the wholesalers said there was no chance to do anything in the wine business anyway, "Why do you waste your time here?" I answered, "Give it a chance and you will be surprised."

So the business grew in a small way, and we opened up maybe 25 states within two or three years, and then in 1941 World War II broke out.

Teiser: Did you before World War II establish a pricing policy that was unusual?

Fromm: Yes. Our wines were all priced at the same level. In New York it was one dollar a bottle, which was then a very high price because you could buy a lot of California wine for 35 to 40 cents. One dollar a bottle. We had this price throughout the country; we only had one price. This was also new. We had only one label. The only change in the label was the name of the wine.

Then we did something else. We found out that an educational campaign had to be started, because otherwise people just wouldn't buy any wine. We needed people to sell wine. Our wine wholesalers

Fromm: just didn't care because a case of whiskey was selling for three or four times as much, and the commission was much higher than on wine. And the people just didn't know wine. It was really a wasteland, America, as far as wine was concerned.

I still was optimistic. I always felt that it would come, because the American people are very flexible, and if something new comes up that is good they take to it. I think what has been done in California in the last fifty years has taken Europe 250 years. The American people, if they have faith in something, the money is available, the people are available, the market is right there, and it is just a question how to sell it. So our problem in the first few years of the firm was to train salesmen of distributors.

Teiser: At that time, didn't Cresta Blanca have some reputation on the East coast?

Fromm: Yes. In a small way.

Teiser: Was it priced below Christian Brothers?

Fromm: I don't think so, but it was not large. Later on it was taken over by Schenley and it became a mass producer.

Teiser: Italian Swiss Colony was on a lower level--

Fromm: On a lower level. Gallo was in the business but was not yet as important at that time. Italian Swiss was very much larger. But most of the wines in those days were shipped from California in tank cars, and if the wine did not ferment on the trip and the tank car did not blow up on the way, it was considered acceptable wine. It was 90 percent sweet wine. It was bottled by the distributor, very often under his own label, and not very frequently under the label of the winery. This was a radical change that took place a few years later. Then wineries promoted their own brands, like Italian Swiss and Gallo and Roma and others.

Teiser: But Christian Brothers was shipping everything in bottles all the time?

Fromm: All bottled at the monastery. We never shipped anything in bulk.

Teiser: Did you consciously adopt the standardized label and the single price, and shipping everything in bottles as a good merchandising plan?

Fromm: Yes.

Teiser: Because it surely was.

Fromm: It was. And what was new was that we had what we called missionary men, a few but as many as the firm could pay for, to help the distributor to train some salesmen so that we would sell some wine. I talked to thousands of salesmen during those years. If we went to a large distributor who had, say 75 or 100 salesmen and three or five were interested in wine, we were already lucky. I think we were the first to adopt uniform label, uniform pricing, and had missionary men that were paid by us and helped the wholesaler in the fullest sense to sell wine, to train him to sell wine. And that really paid off very handsomely for us. We were the first ones to do that. Those steps resulted not from great smartness but from necessity.

Teiser: [laughing] It sounds like a well thought out plan.

Fromm: Well, we had to do it. I always believed that if you are in this business you have to go to the stores; you have to call on the people who buy the wine, not go to the wholesaler and leave it up to him, because if you do generally nothing happens. But if you talk to the people direct and rather extensively, and call on restaurants in the evening— And we worked extremely hard, twelve hour days. But of course we were young and we wanted to make a success.

The World War II Years

Fromm: In the meantime I brought out [of Germany] all my family. We were seven children, and they had children. We were four brothers and three sisters.

Teiser: Your father came too?

Fromm: Yes, but he came very much later, because he didn't think that the Nazis could mean him. He was the last one to leave because he was such a well known and highly regarded man, had a very important title from the German government, "Kommerzein Rat," only given to people who have made an outstanding success and contribution to the country. So he felt that he was safe from the Nazi terror, but unfortunately he was not.

So I brought out all these people, and we are one of the very few large Jewish families that live all in the United States where we have our roots today. Most Jewish families were dispersed all over the world. It is a very fortunate thing for us.

Fromm: When the war broke out, very quickly the shipments from Europe stopped. We were the only California winery that was ready with a certain quantity of good wines--sweet wines and some table wines. We became very succesful during the years, let's say, from 1941 to 1945. Our business increased rapidly. We went into every state of the union.

We didn't do any advertising because there was no money for advertising, and in those days the wine business was a small business basically, but the firm made fairly good money. All of the partners had a good salary. I drew only $25 or $50 a week out of a total yearly salary of $10,000, but the difference was never paid out until many years later. We needed every penny in our developing wine business. In the beginning we had no credit. Nobody knew us and we couldn't get any money from the bank in those days because the firm was too small.

But we did between 1941 and 1945 what would have taken us fifteen years of normal development, so the war situation accelerated our business to a very considerable extent.

American Wine in the Latter 1940s

Fromm: In 1945 there still was no real California wine business or American wine business. There was a poll made by Elmer Roper, who interviewed 5,000 people in America at random to find out what they thought about wine and what they thought the industry could do. The result was, according to the survey, 90 percent of the wine was bought by bums who wanted to buy cheap alcohol; 6 or 7 percent was used by ethnic groups like Italians and others and foreign born people. And maybe 3 percent was purchased by people who knew already a little bit about wine. But as far as table wine was concerned, the business was almost non-existent.

In 1945 and up to 1950-1955, it was very difficult to get any good hotel or restaurant to list any California wine. We made great efforts in this respect, and finally we got some wines listed. I had a lot of connections with the finest stores in the country through my earlier sales of imported wines, and they said, "Well, Alfred, if you insist, we will buy five cases," but then they languished some place in the corner and nothing ever happened. There just was no demand in the finer stores for California wines. And if a hotel or a good restaurant listed one or two California wines, one white and one red, one burgundy and one sauterne, then we felt we were quite successful.

Fromm: The wine business did not exist in the sense we know it today.

However, the large wineries eventually found out if they wanted to make a success and earn enough money to improve the vineyards and the plants and whatever was necessary to conduct a proper wine business, that they had to make some money and that they had to sell their own brands. This is when Gallo, Roma, Italian Swiss, and some of the others started to sell wine under the wineries' own labels. And this is really the start of their brands and marketing.

They sold maybe 90 percent sweet wines, fortified wines, because their type of customer was less used to table wines than our customers were, which were already a step higher. So this business increased, and by 1960-1965 you could see some more optimistic developments. People had some faith that the wine business could be developed in the United States.

Entering the Brandy Market, 1943

Fromm: Our wine business grew consistently, and what was particularly successful for Christian Brothers was that we went into the brandy business in 1940, and by 1943, when we had enough inventory, we were able to come out with a very acceptable American brandy. At that time many people thought it should be called American cognac, which I opposed very much because we have to stand on our own, and if you have to borrow the foreign names, it's not good business in the end.

However, we came out with a clean, good product that was entirely different from French cognacs, which were 99 percent of the brandy category imported into America. We came out with a product that was much lighter, less high in fusel oil and in aldehydes than imported brandies, and was particularly fashioned to mix well with other things like vermouth or whatever mixed drinks were made in those days. Because I could see in my wide travels, in so many restaurants and hotels and bars, that mixed drinks were the big thing, and people rarely drank straight brandy. If they did they bought cognac, but this was not a bar item. It was sold in the finer stores and in the good hotels and restaurants as an after-dinner drink. But I felt very strongly that brandy had a place in the American way of life, particularly in spirits, because it is such a versatile drink and it mixes with almost everything and had to become a bar item.

Teiser: In the development of the brandy at Christian Brothers, who tasted and who decided what?

Fromm: Otto Meyer, who is my brother-in-law--he married my late sister--he was in the brandy business in Germany. His family was in it for generations, too. He knew a great deal about it, and he helped the Brothers tremendously by advising us about the best way to blend a brandy that was different from foreign brandy and that was more eligible for use in mixed drinks. It was a lighter brandy and a more palatable brandy. You know, French cognacs very often have that soapy taste, which is very good for someone who likes it, but the average person in America didn't like it. You see, in those days, don't forget, people were a lot less sophisticated in drinking than they are today.

Teiser: As I remember Christian Brothers brandy when it first came on the market, it was rather sweeter than it is now.

Fromm: Yes. In those days sweetness was one thing that people were looking for. It was not really sweetness in a sense but it was softer and mellower. Then later on when people got more sophisticated and really appreciated fine spirits, the Christian Brothers reduced the level of sweetness considerably.

At that time, when we came out with Christian Brothers brandy, the inventories of French cognacs in America were almost nonexistent, and this became an instant success.

Teiser: How were you making it? Were you using pot stills?

Fromm: We didn't use pot stills for about three years, because we didn't have the pot stills. When I say we I mean the Christian Brothers. We didn't have a pot still in the beginning, but we picked out the brandies very, very carefully from a large pool, and Otto Meyer did really an outstanding job. Our brandy was far superior to anything that was on the market and had an instant success.

Teiser: This was from the prorate pool?

Fromm: Yes. We went throught the whole pool, Otto and I. I think we must have tasted probably six or seven hundred samples of brandy, which was no pleasure. But we picked out those maybe fifteen, twenty lots which were clean, which were nice, and which had some bouquet, and then Otto made some blends. We came out with some brandy that was a highly successful product and far superior in quality to anything which was on the market.

Teiser: Then you started using pot stills?

Fromm: Yes. Then the Brothers saw that pot-still brandy was a heavier, richer brandy. It had to be aged between six to ten years to really attain its full quality. You cannot use it as young as regular brandy.

Teiser: The brandy made in a column still?

Fromm: Yes, the column-still brandy. It's pretty well at the proper age when it's four years old. But by blending in ten to fifteen percent of pot-still brandy, it gave our brandy that quality that didn't exist before.

So we sold to every state in the union. We could have sold more brandy if we had had the inventory.

Teiser: Were you making that at Mont La Salle?

Fromm: No, it was made at Mt. Tivy.

Teiser: Oh, you'd bought Mt. Tivy by then.

Fromm: Yes, the Christian Brothers bought Mt. Tivy from Seagram's. Seagram's owned it at the time. We arranged that the Christian Brothers could buy it at some very favorable terms of payment. On each case that was shipped they paid a few pennies to Seagram's, and after six or seven years the winery was paid off.

Teiser: That put you in a Thompson Seedless area, I assume.

Fromm: Yes.

Teiser: So that you had a good source of supply.

Fromm: Thompson Seedless makes good brandy. It makes a very neutral brandy, and that is desirable, but in order to get more taste and flavor into the brandy, we felt very strongly that we needed some pot-still brandy. That's what got us into the pot stills, because it's much more flavorful and gives you more substance. Because you had blended whiskeys which were very light and didn't have much taste, and vodka came into the market, and to me this was always something that I never could understand why people drink anything that had no taste and no smell and no nothing and was just ordinary alcohol. But it became very successful, and there was a trend to lighter drinks. The heavy bourbon drinkers gradually disappeared and people wanted lighter drinks.

Teiser: Did you use some marketing strategy on that? As I remember, the bottle was a distinctive shape.

Fromm: Yes, it was a nice bottle that we developed and a nice label, but nothing really fancy because we always felt that the money had to be spent on the product and not on the package. So we had a nice, clean, good package, and the package has hardly ever been changed. There was a slight improvement in the label but the package basically is still the same.

Teiser: It's distinctive.

Fromm: Yes, because it's a recognized package and the bottle shape has been copied by many others.

Creating an Advanced Still

Fromm: So the brandy business then became very large, made large revenue for us. And then the Brothers put in a special large continuous still down there, which was entirely different from the stills that existed in California, because the California brandy stills are generally high-proof stills, and we wanted a still with more plates. A much finer product could be developed.

So we went to Seagram's, and Mr. Samuel Bronfman, the one who developed Seagram's and the largest owner of the Seagram's company, became a good friend of ours, and we asked him for some advice, since he was an outstanding expert in spirits. He said to Franz Sichel*, my partner, and to me, "There is only one way you can do it. We will give you our best technical people from Louisville, our still people, who build their own stills, and they will tell you how it should be done." Then we had the right advisers how to build stills, and the Christian Brothers stills today still are the only stills of this kind in the United States.

Teiser: What did this type of still do that other brandy stills don't do?

Fromm: Well, it was a much more sophisticated still than any still existing until today in California. It had a lot of improvements that the whiskey people had worked out over many years for their products, which of course was a big business and a lot of money was spent by them on research. So we were the beneficiary of that and had a brandy still that made cleaner brandy and brandy that did not have

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*For an account of the formation of Fromm and Sichel, successors to Picker-Linz, see pages 22 - 23.

Fromm: as much fusel oil and aldehydes as other brandies produced here. Actually, we were very anxious that the Christian Brothers produce for our sales a brandy that was lighter, softer, and would lend itself particularly for blending in mixed drinks.

Teiser: Does a more sophisticated still "recognize" more sensitively the factors in the brandy as it's being made and separate them out? Is that--?

Fromm: Yes, that's exactly what happens. It gaves us the means to double distill the brandy and clean up any impurities.

So it was not all accidental that the brandy was successful. It took a lot of planning and thinking. But as I have so often said, the marvelous thing in America is that if you talk to the right people they will advise you honestly and give you advice that you couldn't buy for money. That happened to us.

As the brandy business developed further, we had of course to borrow money for inventory at the Bank of America. The Bank of America was very good to us. Very shortly after we started, we got our first credit because we needed to make more brandy and at that time you couldn't get any money in New York on brandy because the banks in New York said, "We will loan on whiskey, but we don't loan on brandy; we don't know it." So we went to the Bank of America; who gave us the first credit, and were very good to us, and I have worked with them since then and never been with any other bank either for the firm or personally.

Agreement with Seagram's, 1954

Fromm: However, the business ran away, and millions were needed to really build the inventory, because at that time we sold already six or seven hundred thousand cases per year of brandy. Your brandy, let's say, is an average five years old, including the pot still, so if you sell five hundred thousand cases you have to make two million cases or two and a half million cases in order to have the inventory at the same level and not even figuring on any increase. So that took an enormous amount of money. So again my partner Franz Sichel and I went to Samuel Bronfman, who was a very good friend of ours. (I have his picture here on the wall; I'll show it to you later) And we said, "What should we do?"

So he said, "Well, Seagram's will buy a 70 percent interest in your firm if you want us to. However, on the condition that Franz Sichel and you remain partners at a sizable share. Because," Mr.

Fromm: Bronfman said to us, "I believe that the most money can be made if you have partners who are financially very much interested in the firm." I said, "Sam, I do not want to work on a salary regardless of what the amount is. I have never worked on a salary. When I was young I worked on commission and I just don't work on a salary." He said, "Well, we want you as a partner for that reason. We don't want a man just on salary."

So Seagram's bought 70 percent. However, the understanding with Seagram's was--and they kept this until last October, 1983, when the firm was sold back to the Christian Brothers--that this was run as a completely autonomous business.

After Franz Sichel died, in 1967, I was president and chief executive officer. I moved in 1941 to California from New York because it was important that a partner of the firm would be here in daily contact with the Christian Brothers, the winery, in California. We moved in '41 to California, and the business developed very well and made money every year except in 1947, when the Christian Brothers and we had a large inventory of wine and then the price controls were dropped, and wine went from $1.20 (sweet wine) to about thirty or forty cents. But that was the only year we lost some money, because we had a large expensive inventory. Otherwise we made some money every year.

Business Principles

Fromm: I have, in those many years that I have been with Picker-Linz as a partner and then with Fromm and Sichel, never have taken a penny out of the firm except my salary and a bonus, because I wanted to increase my stake in the firm, which I have done this way. So this is one of the good things I can say about the German method of running a business.

As I mentioned, we started in the export business of Christian Brothers wine and brandy. We were one of the better known exporters. We shipped to about sixty foreign countries. And the nice thing was that we got a lot of re-orders. See, when you get your first order and you don't get a re-order within six months, then the wine doesn't move. But it worked out quite well. We sold for less money in the export business than we sold in America. We had one price. Nobody could get a different price from us. It was an absolute principle. There was no discount; there was no under-the-table business. I never found it necessary to bribe anyone or to pay off someone. That's just no way to do business.

Fromm: In all these years that I'm in business in America, I found out you don't have to be a mental giant, but you have to have certain principles by which you stick, and this is honesty, and that you know what you are doing and that you know the field in which you are working. And if people trust you--and that's why I like it so much in America--if people trust you, you really have no problems.

Another principle I always worked with is only to deal with the best people, because if you are not so smart yourself and you deal with sharpies, you mostly get the short end. If you deal with honorable and first-class people you do all right. Sometimes people asked me, "Alfred, how come you have so many good distributors in the country?" I said, "Well, for a very simple reason. Because they're people I could talk to, who trusted me, and they're people who would pay us right away." We needed the money right away because in a firm like ours that had developed that fast there was never enough money, because all the money had to go into the inventory.

Teiser: This arrangement with the Christian Brothers group and your group, was there a parallel in the United States at all for such a combination?

Fromm: I don't think so.

Teiser: It was unique?

Fromm: Yes. And as the Brothers often said to me, which pleased me very much, before they made the contract with us they dealt with some people in the East, and they said, "You know Alfred, since we were dealing with a Jewish firm, we never had a better deal. You are honest, you are men of integrity." I said, "Well, it's no more than good business to be honest and have integrity." I have told this to hundreds and hundreds of young men who have worked for us. It was a principle that applied to anyone who worked in the firm. So many of the young people, particularly today, think if you are successful in business that you must have some tricks or that you have some crooked ways of making money. I always tell them, "If ever anyone told you this, they didn't tell you the right thing."

Fromm and Sichel, Successor to Picker-Linz, 1945

Teiser: When did Picker-Linz become Fromm and Sichel?

Fromm: Nineteen forty-five, on January 1. I associated myself as a partner with Franz Sichel, who comes from the wine firm of Sichel-

Fromm: in-Mainz. He was ten years older then I am, a very good wine man, and a very fine person. We were partners for almost twenty-five years and never had one cross word. So it was a very happy relationship. He knew I was more adventurous than he was and more active and younger, so he let me handle things without interference. We talked every Sunday for an hour or an hour and a half on the telephone, discussed everything that was going on, and then we made our decisions right then and there. That worked out very well.

I had already bought out all my other partners. And Franz Sichel joined me in 1945. I needed a large credit in the Bank of America. And just to give you an illustration of how things were in those days, I got a three-year credit at 1 3/4 percent interest per year. Those were different times and it was a very good rate. But one of the top men in the Bank of America who liked me quite a bit, had complete trust in me. He said, "Alfred, the fact that you are so anxious to get the lowest rate of interest--only people who want to pay want the low rate. The ones who don't want to pay, they don't care what we charge them."

Teiser: Do you want to name him?

Fromm: Fred Ferroggiaro. He was an executive vice-president of the Bank of America and chairman of the finance committee. A really old-style banker.

Instead of three years, after one and a half years I was able to pay off my loan at the bank. That was one of the happy days of my life. I had a lot of deferred salary coming that I hadn't drawn, so I drew that, and the taxes were low in those days. So I paid off the bank. Franz Sichel borrowed, too, in the Bank of America, and Seagram's had to deduce that I didn't need any help from them. They knew me in the bank and I didn't need any guarantees or anything. But they didn't know Franz Sichel, so he borrowed in the bank, too, with Seagram's backing, and that was paid off a little later. It was always a very excellent relationship of trust that we had with the Bank of America.

In those days the bank was a lot smaller, and there was much more of a personal relationship. I mean, I had many good friends--most of the presidents of the Bank of America have been personal friends of mine because they liked to talk to a small businessman, too, get his ideas and suggestions.

Sam Armacost, the new president of the bank, I know him well. He's a personal friend. But if you want something, if you go to Sam Armacost you are being turned over to someone else, because the

Fromm: man has so many responsibilities. It's not the same as it was forty years ago.

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Fromm: In 1950 Seagram's became a partner in Fromm and Sichel. The partnership consisted 70 percent of Seagram's and 30 percent was owned by Franz Sichel and myself.

As I told you, we were completely autonomous. Seagram's was always available when we wanted advice, but we never came to them and said, "This is a problem and that's a problem." We said, "Here, this is the problem; that's what we expect to do. Do you have a better solution?" They always said, "Go ahead and do what you described."

You know, as I so often say, the good Lord had his hand over us. That you have to work hard, that you have to be honorable, have integrity, that you know your business--that's only 50 percent. But the other 50 percent is being there at the right time, getting together with the right people. And some people say that's good luck, that's good fortune; I say it was a good hand that was over us. In all those years. And I'm very grateful for that.

Association with Paul Masson

President, 1944-1955

Teiser: There was quite an overlap, was there not, with your interest in Paul Masson?

Fromm: Yes. Paul Masson was owned by Seagram's. They didn't do anything with it. It was very small. They bought it from Martin Ray. It was a premium winery, had some very, very good wines there. But they had no sales organization. One day the head of Seagram's called Franz Sichel and me and said, "We would like you to take it off our hands." We said, "We'll be glad to do it, but we will pay you only as we sell the inventory, because we cannot afford to invest additional money and we don't want to borrow any more money." They said, "Fine, do that."

Then I became president of Paul Masson, and I spent quite some time down there. At that time my father was already here, and he tasted every barrel of wine, and he was really an outstanding

Fromm: taster. And we put a small quantity of wine into the market at that time at, I think, $36 a case, which was an unheard of price. They had some beautiful wines there. That business developed very quickly. The purchase price to Seagram's was paid off within two years.

Teiser: You were president from '44 to '55.

Fromm: Yes. I ran the business in addition to our business here for Christian Brothers, and we did very well with it, but there was a limit how far we could grow because the inventory did not exist, and the winery up in the hills in Saratoga was very, very small. So we did a few things up there, like Music in the Vineyards, started by my late brother Norman. You have heard about Music in the Vineyards? It's already in its twentieth year at Paul Masson. Open-air concerts. We founded that, and it has been done now by other wineries, and the nice thing is if you do something right, other people will do it, too. But it always takes someone to stick his neck out and try to do it.

So we developed this firm, and then we could see there was quite a chance in Paul Masson as a premium winery, as they were only in the table wine business at that time. Otto Meyer, who was with me in the firm, was asked to take over management of Paul Masson and run it, and he became president and ran it quite successfully.

Teiser: Let me take you back if I may. As I remember, at the time that you took it over, the winery wasn't very much and it had little vineyard land. Is that right?

Fromm: It had a few hundred acres of top-grade vineyards up on the hill, but the production was extremely small. We replanted quite a few vineyards, and then in the early 1960s we bought a lot of new vineyard land down near Salinas because there just was no land available in Santa Clara County, as you know, with the development of the whole Silicon Valley, at a price where you could afford to have a vineyard. So we went down there and we planted about 1500 acres.

Teiser: In the meantime, did you have others making wine for you?

Fromm: Yes. We got some wines from Mirassou and from some other people down there. They made it under contract for us. Then we built the winery in Saratoga. That was at that time quite an undertaking. And the champagne business was developed, the wine business was developed. And then in Soledad another winery and crushing plant was built.

Fromm: When Otto went to Paul Masson, there was some sort of jealously between the Christian Brothers and Paul Masson, even though we ran it separately and never had any difficulty in our mind to separate those two and do the right thing for both. But the Brothers felt maybe that I would spend more time on it, so we split it off and made it a completely separate operation.

Teiser: For both of them.

Fromm: --by Picker-Linz first, and then by Fromm and Sichel. So we split it up and they had their own organization.

Teiser: Masson was no longer distributed by your firm?

Fromm: No. They built their own organization and became quite big in the meantime. They went more and more into production of large quantities of wine. They now have another plant in the San Joaquin Valley. But at that time when Otto and I were in charge, we really ran it as a premium wine business, as a top-quality producer.

Planting Vineyards in the Salinas Valley

Teiser: When you bought the acreage in the Salinas Valley, was that a big decision? Were you part of that decision?

Fromm: Yes. It was a decision that gave me many sleepless nights because we didn't know how well a vineyard would do. We were the first ones to do that. And after that Mirassou came in, and after that Wente came in. But we were the pioneers. We were the first ones. Masson bought acreage in 1960, Mirassou in 1961, and in 1962 their first commercial plantings were made.

What we found out later was that the white grapes down there were absolutely excellent but the red grapes needed something else. Red grapes there are not as good as the grapes in Napa or Sonoma. We planted only the best varietal grapes. Then later on the red grapes were mostly grafted over to white grapes like Johannisberg Riesling and Chardonnays and Semillon and Sauvignon blanc.

Teiser: You planted the vines on their own roots?

Fromm: No, they were all grafted on American rootstock.

Teiser: Originally?

Fromm: Yes. Even so, it's no phylloxera yet down there but it's coming

too.

Teiser: Then the Masson vineyards there won't be affected?

Fromm: Yes, they can still be affected; even a grafted vineyard can be affected to some extent by phylloxera in a small way. But it's a danger, you know--if you have pests in a certain territory you never know how far it can go. Some of the chemicals that we used before in spraying the vineyards are outlawed and the new ones are less effective today, so we were very, very careful on that.

Teiser: Did you work with the university on various plantings for Paul Masson?

Fromm: Every vineyard has been plotted and planned by UC Davis. They were absolutley marvelous. They sent their groups down there; they made the surveys and they made us plots of the various soil conditions and all that, and we followed strictly their advice, and it turned out very well. They are the best people in the world. I have been around in my life, and I really can say that.

Teiser: Who there did you work with mainly?

Fromm: There are quite a few people, mainly, Dr. [A.J.] Winkler. We also talked a great deal to Dr. [Maynard A.] Amerine, and to Dr. [Emil] Mrak. Dr. Winkler was really in charge at that time. He sent students down, and it was a good experience for them, and it helped us and hardly cost us anything. It's a marvelous service. And as I have often said, the California wine industry would not be where it is today if it wasn't for Davis, because they are really the tops in wine-making techniques and all that. They developed a combination of modern American technology and European traditions, which is what makes a good mixture.

Teiser: In the rehabilitation of both Christian Brothers and Paul Masson, did you draw on your knowledge of European wineries to select equipment for these wineries?

Fromm: We advised the Brothers, we helped the Brothers to get the best equipment. We gave them the names and we put them in touch with the various people. But in the meantine, the Brothers had developed their own staff of really good people, so that was not so much necessary any more. But we always consulted with each other and worked very closely together. Unfortunately, Brother John died very early, and there were a few successors who were not as well versed in the wine business as Brother John was, who really grew up with it, the same as I.

Teiser: Was champagne an important product for Paul Masson all along?

Fromm: Yes, it was. Champagne was the main product of Paul Masson, but with the chances that we all saw in the wine business, we felt that the wine business had to be developed and came very fast, and that made it necessary then to build the new plant and to put the vineyards in. And then Masson had a lot of contracts with other vineyardists down in Monterey County, so the grapes were then available. They were the first ones to put in a large vineyard, and as I told you, then Mirassou and Wente followed afterwards. There are good grapes from there.

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Association With the Christian Brothers Continued

Selling Christian Brothers Wines

Teiser: One thing that you said yesterday that I was thinking about--you said that when you started working with the Christian Brothers, you decided that it was necessary to educate Americans about wine drinking. How did you undertake that?

Fromm: Well, the first thing was that we had what we called missionary men that called on our wholesalers and distributors and tried to educate the salesmen so that they, in turn, would talk to the retailers. In addition to that, we talked to a lot of wine writers. There were not too many in those days, and they were all new in the business and I was able to give them some helpful information. It was amazing how much good will I found as far as education of wine is concerned, because it's a very pleasant subject.

Teiser: Another thing occurred to me: When you were tasting with the Christian Brothers, were you trying to create a wine that was not European, and not like previous California wines? What was your aim?

Fromm: Our aim in tasting all the wines was to blend together the wines which were most suitable for this purpose because the Christian Brothers, and in particular, Brother John, Brother Timothy and I, felt that we should come out with a product that was on a quality level but at the same time, would appeal to the American taste. And that meant, among the red wines that the wine should not have excess tannin, that the wine had a certain softness to it. As you know, particularly for a neophyte in drinking wine, the scale of taste generally goes from sweet to dry. As I said to you

Gathered for a 1967 meeting in Montreal, *left to right:* Brother Gregory of Mont La Salle; Samuel Bronfman, head of Seagrams; Brother Charles Henry, first American Superior General of the Christian Brothers; Alfred Fromm.

At the Christian Brothers' Greystone winery, late 1970s, *left to right:* Brother Gregory, Alfred Fromm, unidentified person, Brother Timothy, Walter Neihoff of Botsford Ketchum advertising agency.

Fromm: yesterday, America was really a wasteland in those days as far as wine is concerned. We had to come out with something that would appeal to the consumer but at the same time was on a very much higher quality level then the California wines that were in the market and were mostly shipped in tank cars from California and were bottled and sold at very low prices.

The Vie-Del Company

Teiser: I don't know where it fits in, but I want to ask you about the Vie-Del Company. Was it connected with either Christian Brothers or Paul Masson?

Fromm: No, it was not. However, Vie-Del supplied blending sherry to Seagram's, and we were talking to Jim Riddell and Mike Nury, who at that time were running the Vie-Del Company. It was a very small firm at that time, and we built, later on, brandy warehouses at Vie-Del to store the brandy produced by the Christian Brothers. Under our contract with the Christian Brothers only brandy produced by the Christian Brothers could be sold under the Christian Brothers label. This was in effect in all those years.

So we had our brandy warehouses there, and Vie-Del supplied to Seagram's blending sherry, and we became very friendly. It took considerably more money than Vie-Del at that time had of their own to build the brandy warehouses, and their credit with the banks was not very well established. So Fromm and Sichel purchased the majority of the Vie-Del shares. We also got an option on the balance of the Vie-Del shares, and after the death of Mr. [James] Riddell all his shares would have to be purchased by us. So Mr. Riddell knew that there was a market for his share in the business. He did die some years later [in 1973]. And Mr. Nury acquired from us some of the shares at a very advantageous payment schedule, because he is an extremely capable man and has made a great success of the Vie-Del Company. I was a partner in the Vie-Del Company, too, but when I sold my shares to Seagram's in August of 1983, they acquired Fromm and Sichel's shares in Vie-Del, too, and own something like 87 percent of the Vie-Del Company, and Mike Nury owns roughly 13 percent.

St. Regis Vineyards

Teiser: I think I read that in 1939 you bought some vineyard land in California, maybe it was a small amount, and I think I noticed that from time to time you had invested in other vineyard land. Is that correct?

Fromm: No, our firm did not invest in vineyard land as early as that, but we did later on. It must have been about 1975 that we founded the firm St. Regis Vineyards, that was a subsidiary of Fromm and Sichel, that acquired 350 acres of first-class vineyard land in Napa Valley in order to produce additional top varietal grapes that the Christian Brothers needed. The Christian Brothers did not want to put their money in or were not able to put their money in for those additional vineyards so we financed it, and then as the vineyards produced grapes, we turned the grapes over to the Christian Brothers.

St. Regis Vineyards still has this land under long-term leases. It's right on the highway and near St. Helena and then further up in the hills.

Growth of the Christian Brothers

Teiser: Over the years, then, since you have known and worked with Christian Brothers, it's really developed considerably, has it not?

Fromm: Yes, it has developed to one of the leading wineries in the premium business. It's not a boutique winery, it's a medium-sized winery and sales were something like a million and a half cases of brandy and between a million and a half and two million cases of wine. So it's not a small winery.

Teiser: And it's grown physically, also?

Fromm: Yes, very much so. The Christian Brothers built additional facilities in the Napa Valley and they purchased, quite a few years ago, the Greystone Cellars in Napa Valley. They purchased the Bisceglia winery in Fresno. They built a big warehouse near St. Helena. They put in additional vineyards of their own because it was needed. They have invested quite some money in their facilities, and we generally helped them in doing it. The Brothers own approximately 1400 acres in Napa Valley.

Teiser: I read about Greystone being possibly not earthquake-proof.

Fromm: Yes. Well, they will make a lot of seismic investigations now to find out. That building looks like a fortress, and it has big stone walls and all that, but it is earthquake country there, and there is a certain danger, and it is such a popular place for visitors to visit. I know there are sometimes a few hundred people there, and God forbid you had something collapse. It could be really catastrophic. Greystone was built in 1889, and of course in those days one did not know how one could build better earthquake-proof buildings. It is a beautiful place and a great tourist attraction.

Teiser: The Christian Brothers champagne cellars are on the southern edge of St. Helena--

Fromm: Yes.

Teiser: Can you say something about that?

Fromm: Well, we asked the Brothers to produce champagne, and then they put in the Charmat process because in many tastings we found out that we could make a more even-bodied champagne and stabilize the quality. It's made in small tanks and they really have put out a product that is very well accepted by the trade and by the consumer because it is a very good champagne. It was made at Greystone but now, of course, they have to relocate this and put it where they have the big warehouse and storage capacity in St. Helena.

Teiser: They were not making the methode champenoise champagne at Greystone?

Fromm: No, it was all Charmat process champagne. Yes. They were making it there at Greystone at first, and it was well aged there on the upper floor where the champagne facilities were, and there was a lot of room. We put the bottles aside for aging, and after some time it was a really good product.

Teiser: The South St. Helena Charmat process facility itself was quite advanced, was it not, when they built it later?

Fromm: Yes. Brother Timothy and some of his assistants had been to France and to Germany and talked to a lot of people. And then we all decided that the Charmat process for Christian Brothers would be a better process than a bottle-fermented methode champenoise because, as I said, we would have a more even quality product.

The California Brandy Business

Teiser: Have Christian Brothers' sales increased or have they hit a plateau?

Fromm: Well, in the last few years, brandy sales were rather flat. They increased every year by maybe thirty or fifty thousand cases and there was a certain plateau. The Brandy Advisory Board, which unfortunately is being discontinued, was able to promote brandy in a way that a private firm could not do legally. On the other hand, the brandy business is one of the businesses in hard liquor that is more stable and has not receded; in fact the total consumption of brandy has increased.

Teiser: The Brandy Advisory Board was started in 1972--

Fromm: Yes. At that time the president of our firm, Jack Welsch, was instrumental in establishing the Brandy Advisory Board. And all the brandy producers were members of it, and there was a certain assessment on each gallon of brandy produced.

Teiser: It was a California state marketing organization?

Fromm: Marketing order, yes, it was.

Teiser: Has it accomplished what it set out to do?

Fromm: We think it has, yes.

Teiser: Why is it being let go now, then?

Fromm: Well, there is a very large factor--the Gallos. And apparently Mr. [Ernest] Gallo felt that if he spends the money on production that he supplies to the Advisory Board on assessment, he could get more for his money. However, now they're changing because, for the first time, Gallo seems to be willing to cooperate with the vintners, with the producers, to have a joint order for wine. This is quite a change in his attitude. The Gallos are farsighted people.

Teiser: The rise of brandy sales by Gallo, which has been overtaking Christian Brothers--

Fromm: It has overtaken to a very small extent, and right now sales of Gallo and Christian Brothers are about equal, but Gallo brandy is selling for a much lower price than Christian Brothers in general, and they give very large discounts. They are a privately held firm and I think a very profitable firm, and they can well

Fromm: afford to do that. They have the enormous scale of size. Gallo is the lowest-cost producer of any winery in the United States. So they spend considerable money, but generally their brandy sells for less than Christian Brothers'. They do not use any pot-still brandy in their blend. That's a good part of it, so we think it will always be neck and neck, the competition between Gallo and Christian Brothers.

Teiser: The implication in Gallo's effort is that brandy can have a larger market than it has. Do you believe that?

Fromm: Yes, I definitely believe that.

Teiser: Where would it come from?

Fromm: Well, brandy has a lot of versatility and can be used in very many ways. We are getting away more and more from trying to sell to the public brandy in a snifter because there is a different way of using brandy. Brandy is a very nice and soft drink. It is a very agreeable drink. It is made from grapes, so it has all the advantages in the public eye. A very good brandy is really a very good drink. As people get away more and more from harsher whiskeys, the brandy business has increased and will further increase the same as the business in cordials has tremendously increased in the United States--imported cordials and American produced cordials. And they're being consumed mostly by the younger people.

Teiser: Then the brandy market could expand at the expense of whiskey or vodka or--

Fromm: Yes, well, the whiskey business is receding and I think brandy can take some of it. Brandy is only a small part, about 4 1/2 to 5 percent of the consumption of spirits. We feel that progress will be slow but there will be progress every year and it is quite possible that brandy will ultimately have maybe a market share of 8 to 10 percent of the spirit consumption.

Teiser: One of the brandy mysteries, I believe, is its heavy sale in Wisconsin.

Fromm: The consumption of brandy in Wisconsin was for many years much larger than the consumption of whiskey, and nobody has found out the real reasons. Of course, there are a lot of European families there with people of European origins—Germany, in particular--who really didn't know any whiskeys, but brandy was always considered a medicine and very healthy and a good drink. But nobody has explained why the people in Wisconsin just drink brandy so much. They drink a shot of brandy with a glass of beer. A strange way for us to think of it, but that's what happens.

Fromm: Minnesota is a large market and we have done there very considerable business. However, in Wisconsin the brandy business was strictly a price-cutting business and, while we were there for many years, we did not choose to give the brandy away and lose money on it. So a lot of cheap brandy was sold.

Teiser: Are there imported brandies that are competitive with California brandies?

Fromm: Well, certainly not the cognacs that sell for at least two and two and a half times as much, but the so-called French brandies which are not cognacs which are made in other parts of France from low-priced wines. These grapes that are used in the cognac districts are very expensive. There is a very limited production. So, yes, there are some there to give us competition. Low-price brandies particularly from France. And every wine-producing country in the world produces brandy, too.

Teiser: Can you make brandy out of any old wine?

Fromm: Well, you can, but you can not make good brandy out of poor wine. The wine has to be clean, it has to be fresh and has to be made from the right kind of grapes, otherwise you have no flavor. And if you have wine that is half-spoiled and you have so much fusel oil in it, it becomes almost like gasoline; it's undrinkable.

Styles of Brandy

Fromm: Actually, when the Christian Brothers went into the brandy business, there was hardly any brandy business in America. I think we were really the ones who put brandy on the map. There was very little brandy sold here.

Teiser: The California Wine Association had A.R. Morrow brandy.

Fromm: Yes, that was a very heavy brandy and there were some people who liked it, but it was not really for the American taste. I think Christian Brothers was the first one to find out what the American people would like to drink, and then we tried to fashion a good product and told the Brothers what we needed, and had a lot of tasting on that and checked it continously, and decided that pot-still brandy as I mentioned before was a necessary ingredient that would give it quality.

Teiser: Just now there is at least one winery making pot-still brandy--Schramsberg Vineyard, in a joint venture.

Fromm: Yes, yes, that's together with Remy Martin who is from France. But pot-still brandy needs a lot more aging than continuous-still brandy. It will probably take quite some time before it will be on the market. All of the specialties can only be helpful to the brandy business. I always have been of the opinion that good new products--a product that has a special interest that can be produced in small quantities--can only help the industry. It's, you know, like going into a store to buy a dress. You want to look maybe at ten dresses before you buy. That's how most women do. So you have a certain variety that adds some interest to the search.

Teiser: Is there a "boutique" brandy industry starting?

Fromm: If there is there a boutique brandy, I think Christian Brothers had it by putting out X O Brandy. X O [Rare Reserve] had 50 percent pot-still brandy and 50 percent continuous still brandy and was made from the oldest reserves of the Brothers. The Brothers today have by far the largest inventory of old brandy and the largest inventory of brandy altogether in the United States.

Teiser: They served it at your testimonial dinner, did they not?

Fromm: Yes, yes they did. I think that X O Brandy is something that can well compete with good French Cognacs.

Teiser: I would think there would be a temptation for the same kind of people who have a lot of money and don't mind losing it and want to make fine wine--to get into experimenting with pot-still brandy.

Fromm: The brandy business is a very capital-intensive business. It takes a lot of money to do that. As an example, if you sell a thousand cases of brandy, the pot-still brandy would have to be six or eight years old; you would have to produce each year enough for six or eight thousand cases plus whatever you expect your sales increases will be. So it takes a tremendous amount of money. It was the fact that it takes so much money that led us to go to Seagram's and find a very secure large financial basis where there was no limit to how far we could extend the business.

Teiser: I remember having been in the experimental brandy distillery at UC Davis. Have their studies contributed to the industry?

Fromm: Yes, Dr. [James F.] Guymon did a very creditable job. I would certainly say that without the people who work in Davis, the wine industry and the brandy industry in California would not be what it is today. They have a great share, they can take a large share of credit for that.

Teiser: I am told by industry members that the Data Annual summarizing each year's California wine and brandy statistics, was of great value to everyone. Would you tell about how Fromm and Sichel happened to undertake the job of compiling and publishing it?

Fromm: We felt that as a public service we should give pertinent information to the American wine writers, trade associations, and others interested in this material that was not available otherwise to them in such a comprehensive form. We felt that at the same time it would build some good will for our firm.

Sale of Fromm and Sichel to The Christian Brothers, 1983

Teiser: To come back to recent events, Fromm and Sichel continued until just this last year?

Fromm: Fromm and Sichel was sold to the Christian Brothers on October 1, 1983.

Teiser: What part of the holdings of Fromm and Sichel went to the Christian Brothers?

Fromm: Only those holdings that they needed to run the sales business of their products.

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Teiser: You said that the reason for the sale--

Fromm: The issue was that the Christian Brothers were very anxious to combine marketing and production--to synchronize that because this became sometimes a problem. And it had something to do, too, with my retirement, as I was running the firm for so many years. So we turned over a lot of the brandy inventories--the inventories were all made by the Christian Brothers, but we paid for them at time of production because the Christian Brothers couldn't afford to keep brandy inventories of something like $80 million to $90 million.

So we turned over to the Brothers the amount of brandy that they needed for their sales. They asked if they could continue with the name of Fromm and Sichel because we have a respected name throughout the country, which we agreed to. And they took some of our top people, including our general sales manager, who was with us for many years, Al [Allen] Nirenstein, and so we have helped them as much as we can and we will continue to help because we want to see them succeed.

Fromm: I have a personal reason in that, too, I was for 47 years connected with the Christian Brothers, and the firm Fromm and Sichel has my name in it. I was a founder of Fromm and Sichel, and the best part of my business life I spent with the Christian Brothers, so I have a very warm feeling for the Brothers in my heart and I help them whenever possible.

Teiser: Do you still work a little with them, then?

Fromm: Well, they ask me sometimes about certain things, and they know that if there's any problem coming up where I can be of help, that I will be glad to do it and so will the Seagram's company.

Teiser: What is the organization known as the Brandy Association of California with which you continue to be associated as chairman of the board?

Fromm: It was until the sale of Fromm and Sichel to the Christian Brothers a subsidiary 100 percent owned by us. Over the years Brandy Association sold brandy produced by Vie-Del to other brandy marketers. After the sale of Fromm and Sichel, substantial assets, including our office building, not sold to the Christian Brothers were transferred to Brandy Associates, now a Division of Joseph E. Seagram and Sons, New York, and 100 percent owned by them. They have taken over certain pension matters and other obligations of Fromm and Sichel.

Key Men at Christian Brothers

Teiser: Have you tasted for them all these years?

Fromm: Yes, we have done a lot of tasting. That was, I think, maybe one of my main contributions that I could make in the production--in tasting--because it was with Brother Timothy and in former years, Brother John. Brother John was a dynamic guy and he died, unfortunately, much too young and I would say, Brother John and I really put the business on the map. It was a very close cooperation and, as I think I mentioned, in the beginning neither the Brothers nor we had any money to speak of, so it was necessaary to do a lot of things together and fortunately, it did work out well for both parties.

Teiser: Did the two of you sort of teach Brother Timothy?

Fromm: Well, Brother John probably did to a large extent, but Brother Timothy has a very good palate. And Brother Timothy is very good in public relations. I mean his whole appearance. And he's a very kind man and a very knowledgeable man. He has been very helpful in the development of the business, and we have asked Brother Timothy very often to call on certain customers, together with some of our sales force, which has always been successful.

Teiser: Are there others among the Brothers who have become experts?

Fromm: Well, there are some and then, of course, they have some lay people who run the wineries and their production. There was John Hoffman who was in charge of production of table wines in Napa, and he is a brother of the late Brother John. And then down in Mt. Tivy winery in the San Joaquin Valley, there was Herman Archinal--a very capable man who worked very closely with Brother John. Those people are not there any more. They have retired now. There are new people now there. They were there for many years; you know, we all have gotten a little bit older in the last 47 years.

Teiser: But they haven't been able to bring up any Brothers as experts?

Fromm: Well, I always told them how important this was, and they have some people, but they are not as conversant with all the new production techniques that are required today. So they hired some very good lay people.

The Wine Museum of San Francisco, 1974-1984

Teiser: There were other assets of Fromm and Sichel that were disposed of?

Fromm: They were not disposed of to the Christian Brothers.

This building here, that was owned by Fromm and Sichel, was sold recently and this is one of the reasons why the Wine Museum has to be dissolved, because it's part of this building. I built this building twelve years ago as headquarters for Fromm and Sichel, but since I sold my stock 100 percent to Seagram's, Seagram's actually, now is the owner of this building. It's held by Fromm and Sichel, but Fromm and Sichel is owned 100 percent by Seagram's.

Teiser: So it was really Seagram's, through Fromm and Sichel, who made the sale to the Christian Brothers--is that right?

The Wine Museum of San Francisco, incorporating The Christian Brothers Collection, was opened in 1974.
Above, Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Fromm at the opening reception, with a grape vine sculpture by J. B. Blunk commissioned for the museum.
Below, the Thomas Jefferson Gallery.

Fromm: That's correct.

Teiser: But Seagram's held on to this building?

Fromm: Yes.

Teiser: There's a picture of you and several other men standing on a board in what looks like London after the blitz, with glasses of champagne. And it's the site just before construction started. It was clearly a very happy occasion.

Fromm: Well, you know, this building site was really a slum, with some miserable schlock stores. But we bought this lot because it has such a marvelous location particularly for the museum, you know--the end of the cable car line. And there's a tremendous amount of visitors here in this neighborhood, so we were very anxious to get the lot. It was very expensive in those days, but today it's probably worse--three times as much.

Teiser: Who designed the building?

Fromm: Worley Wong, architect in San Francisco.

Teiser: You must have worked very closely with him, did you?

Fromm: Yes, we did, yes.

Teiser: Was the wine museum conceived as part of it originally?

Fromm: As soon as we built the building we created space for the wine museum and built an extra addition for it.

Teiser: The wine museum--may I ask you about it?

Fromm: Well, I always felt that a wine museum that would deal exclusively with wine in the arts would be a great asset to our industry. In fact, the Wine Museum of San Francisco is the only museum in the United States that deals exclusively with wine and the arts. We don't show any old barrels or any big wine presses or things like that, but we really deal with wine in the arts. My late brother, Norman, and I and my wife, we collected for about forty-five years and got some marvelous artworks which today are almost unobtainable. Even if today, say, you want to spend a few million dollars, you couldn't get those collections together because the stuff just isn't available or you can buy it at some auctions--one thing here and one thing there--but it takes many years to get a collection together.

Teiser: Did you buy through agents in Europe, or--

Fromm: Well, we bought through agents in Europe and people we know that had connections. We bought things here, and I had a very large collection of wine books, about a thousand wine books, some of them very, very rare and old, going back to almost the earliest type of printing, in Latin and in Italian. English wine books are, of course, a much later date. And I own this collection and it will end up at the new Seagram museum in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, which was just built and will open very shortly. It is a very large museum for wines and spirits. Most of our collections will go there.

Teiser: I'm so sorry San Francisco is losing all that.

Fromm: Yes. It was really a labor of love. It was a special project of mine, but that's the way those things go, in very large companies decisions are being made that are very difficult to change and the very top management of Seagram's just didn't want to overrule them. They felt the Wine Museum wouldn't produce any revenue. Well, that's of course the wrong attitude. You know, man doesn't live by bread alone.

We had in the museum every year between 100,000 and 125,000 visitors. We were very choosy--we never accepted any bus tours. We could have had 500,000 people a year if we had bus tours, but we didn't want it because a museum should be a place where you can leisurely browse around and really enjoy what we have, and I think it has created a lot of good will not only for Christian Brothers but for the whole industry. And I am very industry-minded. I always felt that what's good for the industry is good for us too.

Teiser: Could you speak a little of Mr. Ernest Mittelberger's part in the museum?

Fromm: Yes. Well, when we opened the museum, Ernie Mittleberger, who had worked as Public Relations Director of Paul Masson and who had worked with me for many years before in New York when our firm was in New York--the old Picker-Linz Company--he was there with us, and I knew that Ernie was always very much interested in art. He was a real student--typical German student, you know; they were very, very thorough. He had to know. So when we opened here, I said, "Ernie, I want you to take that over."

First he said to me, "Well, I don't know if I could do it, if I'm qualified."

I said, "Ernie, you are qualified. You just find out what you have to do." And within a couple of years, it was amazing how well

On a rainy day in 1971 a group celebrated the groundbreaking for the Fromm and Sichel building on Bay Street, San Francisco: Brother Frederick, president of the Christian Brothers winery, *far left*; Alfred Fromm, *third from left*; the architect, Worley Wong, *far right*, with representatives of the construction company.

things ran and how people came to him for information as he was very sound in what he was doing. Ernie and I, we planned then

Fromm: together those various exhibits in the museum which were very well received. We were very anxious that the museum not be used for propaganda and not for trying to sell something. We never sold anything in the museum. Yes, you could buy a few postcards for twenty cents or the book that Ernie wrote as co-author.

Teiser: I have a copy of it, In Celebration of Wine and Life by Richard B. Lamb and Mr. Mittelberger.

Fromm: You probably saw the foreward that I wrote.

Teiser: Yes. I'm about to ask you to autograph it.

There was also a second book, wasn't there, on art?

Fromm: Yes, there have been quite a few books. Some odd publishers came to us and wanted to reproduce a number of our artworks and they did, and they were always very well received, but we never in any way whatsoever promoted any sales of them because I felt this was the wrong way for a museum. A museum should be a public place and a place for the good of the public, and ultimately you get some benefits out of it, too.

Teiser: What will happen to the glass collection?

Fromm: The glass collection belongs to the Franz W. Sichel Foundation. Franz Sichel, as I mentioned, I think, to you yesterday, was my partner for almost twenty-five years. After I started to collect wine antiques, I finally induced Franz that he should do something too (this goes back now about thirty years) and he started to get interested in wine glasses and he had some very excellent advisers, true experts, because those things you have to know. He got a fabulous collection together and this was exhibited in our office, of course. Not all the glasses could be. That was one of the reasons we wanted to show them in the wine museum. Unfortunately, when we opened the museum years ago, Franz was not alive anymore, and then I was appointed president of the Franz Sichel Foundation, and we got the glasses here on loan from the Franz Sichel Foundation. They own the glasses. We didn't want to buy them. That would have been a very sizable investment. His collection is worth, I don't know, probably something between $600,000 and a million dollars. But we were very happy to see the exhibit that carries Franz's name, and it will go to the De Young Museum In Golden Gate Park here for permanent display.

Industry Organizations

Teiser: I wanted to ask you about the Wine Institute. Did you feel that it did a good job educating the consumer, a matter you spoke of yesterday?

Fromm: They did a good job while they had the means. Then they had to stop it, because the [Wine Advisory Board] assessments were discontinued, but the Wine Institute has many other important functions. It looks out for the industry, and almost everybody in the wine industry is a member of the Wine Institute. It takes care of all the legal matters. As you know, every state has a different law for alcoholic beverages, so we are not in that respect in the United States. And there is a federal law. There are continuous changes, continuous difficulties by smaller states that produce a little wine that want to enact preferences and tax wines higher from California.

You wouldn't think such things would exist in the United States, but under the change in the Constitution the states really have the first right--it follows in many ways the guidelines of the federal law. And then we have of course those state monopolies, where only the state can sell wine and liquor, and they have not been very helpful to the wine industry. It's a bureaucratic system, and it's been not good for the consumer by its limited choice of offerings.

Teiser: Do the same or similar regulations apply to brandy?

Fromm: Yes. Whatever alcoholic beverages there are.

Teiser: I believe you served on a committee of the Wine Institue.

Fromm: Yes, I did serve on several committees years ago, but I never wanted to be a director of the Wine Institute because actually it is a producers' organization. Jack Welsch and some other people from our organization were directors. I felt I had more impact in talking through them.

John De Luca [president of the Wine Institute] is an absolutely outstanding man. It is a very difficult job to balance the various forces. You know, after all, Gallo is the largest contributor to the Wine Institute.

Teiser: Has James McManus of the Brandy Advisory Board been a help to the brandy industry?

Above, Ernest Mittelberger, director of the Wine Museum of San Francisco, and Alfred Fromm examine a wine jar of King Solomon's time that was given to the museum by Teddy Kollek, mayor of Jerusalem.
Below, at a reception given at the museum, *left to right,* Philip Hiaring, publisher of Wines and Vines; Baron Philippe de Rothschild, guest of honor; Alfred Fromm.

Fromm: Yes, he has. They were able to do certain advertising and tastings that under federal law we could not do. It has been a useful organization.

Teiser: Is there now going to be a voluntary brandy organization to follow the Brandy Advisory Board?

Fromm: We don't know yet. There probably will.

Teiser: Is there something more I have not thought of to ask you?

Fromm: Well, you know what the set-up is at the Christian Brothers. The Mont La Salle Vineyards is owned by the De La Salle Institute. The Mont La Salle Vineyards is a taxpaying organization, and the De La Salle Institute is not. The money that the Brothers are making is being used for the maintenance of several of the schools, and this has been successful enough so that the Provincial has had enough money out of the business so that they never had to close down any of the schools. They are good educators, and any good school is good, regardless of what faith you are. In the end if it's taught with the right principles it only can do some good.

As you probably know, I have been a regent of St. Mary's College for many years and was awarded an honorary degree in 1971. My wife and I founded the Fromm Institute for Lifelong Learning at the University of San Francisco ten years ago. Both my wife and I got an honorary degree, Doctor of Public Service, for the formation and funding of the Fromm Institute, because it was something new and needed. It has become the most successful institute of its kind in the United States. We educate retired people during the daytime at an advanced university level in an age group from fifty to nintey years. Students are taught exclusively by prominent retired professors, chosen from the University of California, Stanford University, San Francisco State University, University of San Francisco, and others.

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please print or write clearly)

Your full name ALFRED FROMM

Date of birth 1-23-1905 Place of birth Kitzingen/MAIN (Bavaria)

Father's full name Max FROMM

Birthplace GROSSLANGHEIM (Bavaria)

Occupation OWNER OF N. FROMM, VINTERS & Shippers Kitzingen

Mother's full name MATHILDE (BOEN MAIER) FROMM

Birthplace FISCHACH (Bavaria)

Occupation Housewife

Where did you grow up ? Kitzingen

Present community San Francisco, Cal.

Education MIDDLE HIGH School

Occupation(s) WINE DISTRIBUTING FIRM Chief Executive

Special interests or activities Education for retired people FOUNDER WINE Museum of S.F. President Jewish Community Museum, SF. Director S.F. Opera, Trustee Conservatory of Music, SF. Regent ST. Mary's College, Moraga, Director of many Charitable organizations

FROMM, ALFRED, distbg. co. exec.; b. Kitzingen, Germany, Feb. 23, 1905; s. Max and Mathilda (Maier) F.; student Viticultural Acad., 1920; L.H.D. (hon.), St. Mary's Coll., 1974; D.Public Service (hon.), U. San Francisco; m. Hanna Gruenbaum, July 5, 1936; children—David George, Carolynn Anne. Came to U.S., 1938, naturalized, 1943. Export dir. N. Fromm, Bingen, Germany, 1924-33; v.p. Picker-Lintz Importers, Inc., N.Y.C., 1937-44; exec. v.p. Fromm & Sichel, Inc., N.Y.C., also San Francisco, 1944-65, pres., 1965-73, chmn. bd., chief exec. officer, 1973—; dir. Joseph E. Seagram & Sons, Inc. Dir. Calif. Med. Clinic for Psychotherapy, San Francisco, 1964—. Mem. nat. council Eleanor Roosevelt Meml. Found., N.Y.C.; trustee San Francisco Conservatory Music; regent St. Mary's Coll., Moraga; v.p. Jewish Nat. Fund; bd. dirs. San Francisco Opera Assn.; founder, pres. Wine Mus., San Francisco. Clubs: Concordia, Commonwealth (San Francisco). Contbr. articles profl. jours. Home: 850 El Camino del Mar San Francisco CA 94121 Office: 655 Beach St San Francisco CA 94109

From *Who's Who in America*
42nd Edition, 1982-83

100 MILLION EMPTY GLASSES

Address by Alfred Fromm, Executive Vice President, Fromm and Sichel, Inc., San Francisco, New York, and Chicago, World Sales Agents for The Christian Brothers Wines, Champagnes and Brandy, before the Advertising Club of San Diego, National Wine Week Luncheon, at the El Cortez Hotel, San Diego, October 16, 1957

Mr. Chairman, honored guests, members and friends of the Advertising Club of San Diego, ladies and gentlemen:

It is my great pleasure to bring you the warm and friendly greetings of California's 35,000 grape and wine growers -- growers who, at this very moment, are busily gathering in the vintage.

For this is the peak of the harvest season, and in the hills and valleys of our great State, from San Diego to Eureka, from the coast to the Sierras, busy hands move the crop from vine to vat amid the fresh aroma of the bubbling juice.

And this, too, is National Wine Week -- set aside each year at this time by official State proclamation to honor one of California's most important industries and to focus public national attention upon the products of our abundant vines.

I am most grateful for this opportunity to speak to you of wine in the historic City of San Diego. It was almost at our very door step here, beside the Mission bearing your fair city's name, that the first wine grape vineyards were planted by Father Junipero Serra just 188 years ago, marking the birth of grape and wine culture in California.

Wine, it has been said, is one of man's greatest gifts, bestowed by Nature in one of her more loving moods. To the truth of this, we of the wine industry most emphatically subscribe. It is sometimes difficult to be prosaic about the product by which we live -- a product extolled in Bible and legend, in verse and narrative, in song and art. Yes, even completely outside of our industry there are tens of thousands of men and women in all of life's walks who regularly foregather to pay homage and tribute to the vintager's artistry. To mention but a few: The Wine and Food Societies, The Societies of the Medical Friends of Wine, The Wine Appreciation Societies, The Gourmet Societies, and many more. They form the inner, active circle of an ever growing public on whom the quality producers of California's premium wines and champagnes largely depend. They do not represent, however, the great American public whose attitude toward wine, we were glad to have confirmed in a recent study by opinion analyst Elmo Roper, is friendly and favorable. The great American public, Roper found, thinks of wine in most cordial receptive terms but they think of it as something special, to be enjoyed not just every day but chiefly on special occasions.

We produce in California a wide range of good wines in different price classes. Coming from an old wine family in Germany myself, I can tell you with all my conviction that the average wine of California is consistently better than the average wine of Italy, France, or Germany. Too, wine is made here under more advanced scientific and sanitary conditions than is the case in Europe.

I am not talking about the very small quantity of fine European vintage wines that are produced once in a while in good years and due to their rarity have to be sold at very fancy prices, but about all other European wines. This is not only a personal conviction but a fact that has been proven time and again in an extended series of blind wine tastings. People of all classes and tastes from layman to connoisseur have participated in these tastings, and have not only, in the majority of cases, failed to identify the origin of the wine as being European or Californian but, furthermore, the overwhelming majority have expressed their taste preference for California premium wines.

We are proud and happy as Americans of the high score California has had in these tastings. Most heartening to us was the average cost of the California wines which were subject to these tastings and which were purchased in stores throughout the country. Their cost averaged $1.35 per bottle of wine, whereas the European wines cost an average of $3.57 per bottle. The average cost of the California premium champagnes, which scored so heavily over the champagnes of our French colleagues, was $4.41 compared to $8.83.

The growing of fine wines in California has been, and is being, spearheaded by the producers of premium wines. None of these is a volume producer and their aggregate production amounts to only about 5% of California's total production, but it is a significant group indeed from the standpoint of pioneering the name of California as one of the world's great wine producing regions.

However, the fact that wine has not found the place it rightfully deserves in the American pattern of living is not caused by economic factors. The large producers in California furnish to the consumer a worthwhile product at very reasonable cost, and even the finest premium wines are within the reach of millions of people.

What, then, is our problem? A few figures will give you the idea: Wine consumption in Western Europe varies from 15 to 30 gallons per capita annually. In the United States, on the other hand, the figure is only 0.9. What's more, beer consumption in this country is a whopping 16 gallons per capita, coffee 27 gallons, and even soft drinks are consumed at the rate of 12 gallons per inhabitant. In California the situation is, of course, much better than in the rest of the country for here we consume close to 3 gallons per capita annually, but even here we feel we have not begun to tap the potential of the market for wines. Looking again at the country as a whole, our best estimates tell us that 85% of all the wine is consumed by roughly 15% of the population or, conversely, that 85% of the people consume only 15% of the wine. You do not need a slide rule to see what would happen if we could bring these 85% who now use little or no wine to consume only as much as the remaining 15%.

Actually, we as an industry have been hard at work to develop a larger market for wine in this country. We are critical of ourselves though, and engage in continuous self examination as to what we can do. The problem of increased consumption has been tackled on seven broad fronts, as follows:

First, we developed several new wine types that have found high public favor, particularly with people who seldom had used wine before. Outstanding among these new types are the mellow red wines often called "Vino", and the gay, colorful Rosés whose popularity is increasing rapidly.

Second, we took wine out of the category of a commodity and began to create wine brand consciousness. This was done by greatly intensifying our efforts in the areas of merchandising and advertising.

Third, we stepped up industry trade educational work with store keepers and clerks, restauranteurs and waiters, and our distributors and their salesmen. The Wine Institute and the Wine Advisory Board have contributed importantly to the success of this phase of the program.

Fourth, we broadened and extended industry public relations work with consumers. The Wine Institute's Study Course -- in which I would urge all of you to enroll -- has been of significant value in communicating facts about wine to the public. Recently the public relations firm of Hill and Knowlton has been retained by the Industry to assist in developing public interest in our wines, particularly with people who mold public opinion.

Fifth, we have undertaken many new research projects in such diverse fields as wine economics, consumer taste preferences, consumer attitudes, the great benefits of wine in the field of medicine, and numerous others. These have helped materially to improve our understanding of the industry and some of this research may one day open up whole new vistas of wine as an integral part of the American way of life. At this point, it is befitting to express the Industry's gratitude to the University of California for its unselfish devotion and high standards of achievement in many of these research projects.

Sixth, and most important of all, we intensified our work in quality improvement in all phases. Large acreages of improved grape varieties were planted to produce finer wines. Lessons learned from intensive research were applied to the handling of grapes, crushing and fermentation. Larger and larger inventories of wines were set aside for aging each year to create a solid foundation of improved quality on which to build the increased sales we confidently expect.

And, finally, we invested many millions of dollars in wine production, aging and bottling facilities and equipment that are the most modern to be found anywhere in the world. All of these things were done -- and, for that matter, are continuing to be done -- to bring the consumer the best possible product we are capable of producing. Truly, it can be said that California wines in all price classes today are of distinctly higher quality than ever before in history.

These efforts have paid off handsomely, particularly in three products of the wine industry -- Champagne, Vermouth and Brandy.

Sales of California champagne have risen 150% in the last 10 years, compared to about 35% for table wines and less than 10% for dessert wines. The reasons for this remarkable growth are quite clear. We have improved our quality tremendously, heightened the attractiveness of our packaging, developed strong point-of-sale techniques and kept prices at moderate levels.

While California champagnes were tripling in volume, imports increased less than half as much during these past ten years. People discovered that California champagne quality is second to none in the world -- including the choicest imports selling at double or more the California champagne price. Today, American champagnes outsell the foreign product almost three to one and the spread is widening.

Much the same thing has happened with Vermouth. Right after Repeal in 1933, and for years thereafter, France and Italy supplied practically all the United States Vermouth demand. Now the pattern is changing rapidly. California vermouth sales have more than doubled in the past ten years and are fast catching up with the import volume. The American public has learned -- just as they learned with champagne -- that the California product is tops in the vermouth field and twice as good a buy as the import.

So, too, with California brandy. Only even more so, because the California product now sells at two and one-half times the rate of foreign brandy. Here is a shining example of quality improvement, merchandising and brand development paying off. California brandy is achieving fast-growing recognition as the most versatile, the most pleasing of all spirit beverages. Patiently aged for years under United States Government supervision, California brandy is enjoying the greatest market advances in its long history -- and the outlook is for more of the same.

You will now have realized that we are faced with an inherent paradox: on the one hand we are proud of the association of wine in the minds of the public as a contribution to better living. Yet, on the other hand, we must fit wine into the picture of hamburger, apple pie, and the general pattern of everyday American living. Ladies and gentlemen, the necessity of resolving this paradox is what we as an industry bring before you. And it is only you who can work with us on this job. To do this we must, through you, communicate to the American public the good and simple facts about wine. We must convey the fact that wine is a food beverage, to be enjoyed with other foods, or just by itself, and for its own goodness. It must help to motivate the millions of people who are friendly toward wine to emerge from their apathy, and to discover wine's pleasures.

In which direction should our advertising be channeled?

Today, there are uncounted millions of younger people -- the newly marrieds, the thirty and forty-year olds -- women especially -- who know little or nothing about wine. Many of them yearn to know, or would if their attention were directed to the virtues of wine.

Wine's most important place, however, is in the home, on the family table. Its pleasurable and temperate use will set the pattern for the generation now growing up and a civilized approach to wine when they become adults. In this area, more than in any other, the future of the wine industry rests.

Effective advertising can help sell a worthy product or service. And wine is no exception. At this point you are in a key position for you are the connecting link between our industry, ready and anxious to serve the public, and a public enjoying an unsurpassed standard of living, with more leisure time than ever in which to enjoy the good things of life.

We realize that advertising alone cannot solve our problems but it must carry a very important share of the common effort.

I think I speak for all of us in the wine industry in saying that we today have a very different idea of the relationship between advertising and our work. Whereas only a few years ago, an advertising agency meant to us only an intermediary, we realize today the many other vital services that the advertising profession offers us and we gratefully avail ourselves of them.

We now work closely with the advertising agency of the Wine Advisory Board, Roy Durstine Co., and the agencies for our respective brands in all matters concerning merchandising, such as packaging, the development of trade marks, point of purchase material, promotional literature, etc., and even production has often been influenced considerably by the advertising profession who is in daily touch with the consumer, his needs, and his preferences.

Last year wher I had the pleasure of speaking during National Wine Week to the Advertising Club of Los Angeles, I stuck my neck out in predicting a 100% increase in wine consumption within the following five years. I am happy to say a year later that my head is still on my shoulders, and it is my hope to keep it there for the next four years. There is no telling how far the wine business can go in this country, and I believe that you and we together will succeed in fashioning the key to unlock the cabinets and shelves throughout the Nation, behind which 100 Million Empty Glasses stand ready to be filled with the good wine of our own State.
Thank you very much.

1882 CENTENNIAL 1982

THE CHRISTIAN BROTHERS.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For further information contact: Ron Batori
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NAPA, CALIFORNIA, September 22, 1983. . . Brother David Brennan, F.S.C., President and Chairman of the Board of Mont La Salle Vineyards has announced an agreement to acquire for an undisclosed sum certain business assets of Fromm & Sichel, Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of Joseph E. Seagram & Sons, Inc., related to the distribution of THE CHRISTIAN BROTHERS brandy and wines as well as the facilities for the aging and bottling of brandy.

The acquisition is being made by a newly formed company in which the majority of common stock is to be owned by senior management of Mont La Salle Vineyards and the newly formed company, and the balance by Mont La Salle Vineyards, producers of THE CHRISTIAN BROTHERS brandy and wine. In making this announcement, Brother David said,

> "The new company, which will retain the name Fromm & Sichel, Inc., will provide the foundation for growth in the marketing and sales of THE CHRISTIAN BROTHERS brandy and wine.

more. . .

Page 2.

Brother David has also announced that R. Paul Toeppen is Chairman of the Board of Directors and Chief Executive Officer of the new company. Allen M. Nirenstein will be appointed Executive Vice President/Sales.

Brother David added,

> "Importantly, the firm of Albert E. Killeen & Associates, Inc. has been retained to direct the structuring and implementation of marketing, sales, merchandising, promotional and advertising plans, and the development and positioning of new products.
>
> Albert E. Killeen, President of the firm that bears his name, was formerly Vice Chairman of THE COCA COLA COMPANY, and President and Chief Executive Officer of THE WINE SPECTRUM."

In concluding, Brother David said,

> "The formation of the new company, along with new senior management at the winery and significant capital improvements currently in progress, provide a strong foundation for the resurgence and position for growth of THE CHRISTIAN BROTHERS brandy and wines."

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Ruth Teiser

Born in Portland, Oregon; came to the Bay Area in 1932 and has lived here ever since.
Stanford University, B.A., M.A. in English; further graduate work in Western history.
Newspaper and magazine writer in San Francisco since 1943, writing on local history and business and social life of the Bay Area.
Book reviewer for the San Francisco Chronicle, 1943-1974.
Co-author of Winemaking in California, a history, 1982.
An interviewer-editor in the Regional Oral History Office since 1965.

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